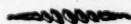


Richd Baerent
1813

MARGARITA.



A NOVEL.



MARGARITA.

A NOVEL.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF TRADITIONS.

“ The legitimate end of fiction is the conveyance of truth.”

DR. JOHNSON'S LIFE OF WALLER.

VOL. II.

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MARGARITA.

CHAP. I.

MANY days had already elapsed since Margarita's arrival at the convent ; when one morning, while the holy sisters were assembled in the chapel, she was surprised and astonished by the voice of the Lady of Rosendhall in the gallery which conducted to her apartment. In an instant the door was opened by the friendly Nun, and the Countess appeared. Her features were dressed in artful smiles, and she

embraced Margarita with an air of affection. "My daughter," she said, "you have done well; your composure and resignation to your destiny are highly commendable."

Margarita sighed.

"All your faults are now forgotten," she added; "one thing only is now required to establish the high opinion which those entertain of you who are most interested in your welfare; you are not unhappy in this blessed seclusion; resolve never to quit it."

"Great Heaven!" exclaimed Margarita, "spare me this cruel trial."

"Many mysterious circumstances," returned the Countess, as she pressed her trembling hand within her's, "will disturb your peace if you return to active life, while in this sweet retreat, beneath
this

this hallowed shade, you will be protected from every danger. Heavenly composure and peace of mind will here be your lot. You weep," she added, with a smile ; " these are the tears of resignation, of celestial hope."

" Oh Albert !" exclaimed Margarita, clasping her hands in an agony of grief, " must I never again behold you ?"

" Albert," said the Lady of Rosendhall, " will glory in the act ; he will bless those vows by which his lovely Margarita was devoted to Heaven, and preserved from the dangers which threatened her."

" What would you say ?" interrupted Margarita.

" Consult your own happiness," added the Lady of Rosendhall ; " become one of the holy sisterhood."

“ Resistance would be vain,” replied Margarita in a faltering accent.”

“ Beloved child,” said the Countess, folding her in her arms, and pressing her to her heart, “ I could not have hoped so prompt an assent. Great Heaven ! sanction the glorious act, receive this noble sacrifice !”

“ Holy Virgin ! what have I said ?” exclaimed Margarita. “ Is the option no longer allowed me ? Is my fate irrevocably decided ?” Her eyes were closed, her limbs trembled, and she sunk almost lifeless in the arms of the Countess.

The Nun, who had listened with extreme agitation to their discourse, uttered a shriek of terror as she gazed upon the pallid countenance of Margarita. “ Rather had I died,” she said, as she wiped away

away the tear that trembled in her eye,
“ than seen this hour !”

“ Senseless woman,” said the Lady of Rosendhall, “ that shriek will destroy all our hopes.”

A voice was instantly heard, and a hasty step, in the gallery,—“ Where, where is my child ?” exclaimed a gentleman of a tall and majestic figure, who rushed into the room.

Margarita, opening her eyes, instantly recollected the voice, and marked the well-known features of her father, on whose resemblance she had so often gazed with filial reverence. “ Oh my father, my father !” she exclaimed, as she sprang forwards, and threw herself at his feet.

The dark eyes of the Baron Rhodolpho were filled with tears, as he raised his lovely daughter, and pressed her to his heart.

“ My father, my preserver !” said Margarita, elevating her eyes towards him, while a faint bloom arose in her cheek, and her features brightened with the sweetest smiles.

“ Never, never will we part,” exclaimed the Baron ; “ the paternal roof shall henceforth afford thee an asylum, and thy father’s love shall soothe thy sorrows.”

“ Madness !” uttered the Lady of Rosendhall, as she seized his hand, and endeavoured to draw him from Margarita, “ you forget yourself ; suppress these dangerous emotions.”

For a moment the Baron gazed upon his sister with an air of distraction ; then suddenly recollecting himself, he quitted Margarita, and striking his hand upon his forehead, “ I am undone, I am lost for ever !” he exclaimed ; “ how shall I extricate

cate myself from this dreadful perplexity ? how shall I escape the vengeance which awaits me ?”

“ Peace !” said the Lady of Rosend-hall, “ every hope is not yet forfeited ; justice may be eluded, vengeance may be appeased, but all depends upon your own resolution ; Margarita must no longer delay to take the holy vows.”

The Baron sighed, and gazed, with painful resolution, on the Countess and his weeping daughter.

Margarita observed the dreadful conflict that agitated his breast ; and while her sympathy, with his afflictions, taught her to forget her own, she advanced towards him, and pressing his hand to her trembling lips, “ Blessed,” she said, “ will be those vows, grateful will be that sacrifice by which Margarita can secure her

father's peace ; the recollection of such an act," she added, while she endeavoured to suppress the starting tear, " will gladden the years of solitude, and soften the pangs of her last hours."—As she uttered these words, the cheeks of the Lady of Rosendhall reddened with astonishment and admiration which she could not conceal ; while the Baron Rhodolpho, wholly subdued by the generosity of his child, clasped her in his arms, and called Heaven to witness, that the fear of death itself, with all its attendant horrors, should not compel him to abandon her. The sudden transition from sorrow to joy, from a state of despair to that of the sweetest hope, so entirely overcame Margarita, that she sighed deeply, and sunk into a state of insensibility.

When

When she recovered her senses, she found herself alone with the Countess, of whom she eagerly asked if her father had forsaken her.

"Be composed," said the Lady of Rosendhall; "you have nothing to fear."

"Has my father left me for ever?" she again asked.

"No," replied the Countess, "you will see him again before the close of the day; but the time may yet come when you will regret the tranquillity of this convent."

"I may then hope," returned Margarita, "to leave it?"

"Your release from this confinement," said the Countess, "is granted you upon one condition. It is impossible, Margarita," she added, "to conceal from you any longer that you are the daughter of

the Baron Rhodolpho ; but such is your father's situation, that should this be generally known, his life would probably be endangered. This circumstance may perhaps seem incredible to you, nor is it in my power to account for a fact, the fatal cause of which I have never yet presumed to explore.

“ But you have a feeling heart, Margarita ; you will not trifle with the safety of a parent, who hazards his life to promote your happiness ;—such is his paternal affection, that he has resolved to remove you from hence, and to take you to his castle ; you will there behold your mother, and enjoy that splendour to which your birth entitles you. But before you leave this apartment, you must bind yourself, by a solemn promise, never to reveal the secret with which I have trusted you ;

never to address the Baron or Baroness Rhodolpho by the sacred title of parent, nor treat them otherwise than as friends, to whom gratitude and respect are due."

"Alas!" said Margarita, "is it possible that a father should exact such a promise from a child?"

"Life is dear," replied the Countess; "punishment and infamy are terrible; you will appear at the castle of the Baron Rhodolpho as his niece, the daughter of a brother who died on the shores of Barbary.

"As we really had such a brother, the deception will not be so easily discovered, and the Baron will incur less danger by taking you under his protection. When this solemn promise is once made, no more will be required of you; but, as you value your life, never inquire into

any mysteries, or endeavour to penetrate the motives of the Baron's conduct."

When Margarita had made this promise, the Countess embraced her; and bidding her adieu, left the chamber.

The evening was already far advanced, when the Nun returned, and informed her that the Baron Rhodolpho waited for her at the gate. As she followed the holy sister through the courts of the convent, she perceived that she wept: this circumstance affected, without alarming her; the tear, however, trembled in her eye as she bade her farewell, and followed the Baron to the coach.

This sudden and unexpected deliverance had so affected the mind of Margarita, that she was at that moment only susceptible of the most pleasing sensations. New scenes now opened to her view—
scenes,

scenes, as she then thought, of the utmost joy; and she flattered herself for a moment, that, while she enjoyed her father's favour, she should be exempt from every sorrow. The remembrance of the promise, which she had so lately made, induced her for some time to preserve a strict silence; but gratitude at length overpowered every other consideration, and she could no longer conceal her sentiments from the Baron, to whom she owed all her present happiness.

“Margarita,” he replied, “have you already forgotten the solemn promise which was required of you?”

The sternness, with which these words were spoken, assured her that the Baron would never relax from his present severity; he had indeed twice betrayed the emotions of paternal affection, but the circumstances

circumstances which had excited them, no longer existed. She remembered his rigid silence during her journey to Rosendhall Castle, and her mind became once more a prey to anxiety and grief.

The train of the Baron Rhodolpho passed over a terrace, below which, amid the gloom of evening, was seen the forest of Rosendhall. It at length descended the heights on which the monastery was situated, and rested at the door of a small cabin in the skirts of the wood.

The Baron led Margarita into the cottage, and ordered some refreshment to be instantly prepared: "We shall enjoy a few hours' repose in this place," he said, "and to-morrow we will continue our journey." As he spoke, he threw himself on a chair, and, folding his arms, remained pensively silent.

Margarita

Margarita contemplated him for some moments with painful solicitude. Is this, she thought, the father, whose approving smiles, and testimonies of paternal love, had so lately inspired her with the sweetest hope? Some intrusive recollection has dashed his present joys, and filled his mind with dreadful apprehensions of future ill.

While she yielded to these reflections, she approached the window, and opened the casement; the moon-beams played on the waving branches of the adjacent trees; the evening breeze wafted the soft and plaintive notes of the nightingale from the shadowy recesses of the forest.

Margarita remembered to have heard these melodious sounds at her beloved Ermengarda, while she was yet a stranger to sorrow. The tears, which she had long restrained,

restrained, now began to flow ; but recollecting herself, she hastily wiped them away, and retired from the window.

Her melancholy was not, however, unobserved by the Baron. “ You are not happy, Margarita,” he said ; “ you have not that confidence in me which I could wish ; so long as you observe certain rules of conduct, it will be in my power, I trust, to protect you.”

“ It shall always be my highest pleasure,” returned Margarita, “ to obey your injunctions, and to promote your happiness to the utmost of my ability.”

“ If you really wish to consult my welfare,” returned the Baron, in a milder tone, “ you will endeavour to assume a greater degree of composure. Your situation demands courage and resolution ; I never can witness those tears without
sorrow,

forrow, they may some time cost me dear. Endeavour to restrain them," he added ; " endeavour to acquire that dignified firmness, so rare in the female character, without which virtue can have no stability. But you are fatigued—for once I pardon this weakness ; retire to your apartment, take some rest, and be ready at an early hour to continue our journey."

Margarita obeyed her father's command, and was conducted to the best chamber which the cottage could afford, where, overcome by the fatigues of the day, she soon found some relief in sleep.

Long before the sun arose the Baron and his train recommenced their journey. During the greater part of the day the Baron remained silent and reserved ; his mind seemed to be constantly abstracted
from

from the present scene, and occupied in painful and perplexing thought.

Before the close of the third day they reached Berlin, where the Baron was joined by many of his attendants who there waited his arrival. He informed Margarita that he was nearly at the end of his journey, and expressed some pleasure in the prospect of reaching his castle before the close of autumn, which was already far advanced.

CHAP.

CHAP. II.

ON the following morning they left Berlin, and descended into a wild romantic country, the roads through which were almost impassable. They traversed the borders of a lake, which was shaded by lofty woods of beech; part of the lake was overgrown with weeds, and thickly fet with small islands, scarcely large enough to contain the cabin of the fishermen. Having crossed an arm of this lake, they directed their course through a tract of country more rude and uncultivated

vated than any they had hitherto seen ; and as they continued to advance northward, they began sensibly to feel the change of climate and the rapid approach of winter.

At length, from a high point of the road, they discerned a long range of snow-crowned hills, which, circling around the horizon, were scarcely distinguishable from the clouds which rested on their summits.

They advanced in a direct line towards these hills, until the approach of night compelled them to repose at a hamlet on the way-side.

When they continued their journey on the following morning, they could trace more accurately the rude and craggy outlines of the mountains ; and beheld the rays of the rising sun reflected from their snowy heights, while vast and impenetrable forests

forests shaded their broad bases ; the majestic oak, the chestnut, and the elder, whose falling leaves autumn had decked with various beautiful colours, were distinctly seen amid the groves of dark pine.

While these sublime objects inspired Margarita with delight, a sudden turn of the road presented to her view a vast torrent rolling between two mountains, and casting its white foam upon the surrounding rocks ; from the agitated wave ascended a light resplendent vapour, which arose like a stately column above the woods, and shone with all the brightest hues of the rainbow.

Towards the decline of the day the coach entered a deep pass between the mountains, above which the waving branches of the trees formed a rural arch.

The

The trampling of the horses, and the rattling of the wheels upon the stony pavement were re-echoed from every side. It was nearly dark when they emerged from the deep road, and began gradually to ascend the mountains.

“ I wish to sleep to-night at the village of Gortze,” said the Baron, breaking a silence which, with very little interruption, had continued for many hours.

“ How far is that from hence ?” said Margarita

“ Not above a league,” replied her father, and again relapsed into silence.

Margarita rejoiced that the fatigues of the day were so nearly terminated. The gloom increased, and the wind swept keenly cold amid the mountains. The Baron called to his servants, and bid them beware lest they should mistake the road ;
then

then wrapping his mantle around him, and resting his head against the back of the carriage, seemed to be asleep.

They again struck into the thick woods, with which the mountains were almost entirely covered. The roads were so extremely rough and uneven as to threaten the greatest danger; the coach was shaken from side to side, and the horses were scarcely able to proceed. Margarita was terrified; the Baron roused himself, and commanded his attendants to make the utmost expedition, but, above all, not to turn aside from the high road upon the peril of his heaviest displeasure.

“The passes of the mountains are so intricate, and the night so dark,” they replied, “that it is almost impossible to discover the right track.”

The

The Baron once more commanded them to observe his directions, and seemed to be again composed to sleep.

They, at length, disengaged themselves from the woods, and advanced into a plain encircled by trees and situated at the foot of a huge and shapeless rock, on whose awful summits were dimly seen the dark towers of a majestic edifice. As the train of the Baron advanced, the tempestuous clouds that had gathered in the heavens, were dispersed by the irregular gust ; and the moon, arising from behind the neighbouring hills, rested her serene light on the rough walls of the edifice.

The rough steps, hewn out of the solid rock, beneath the portal, now became visible, and seemed to be the only ascent to the stony platform. The arched gateway appeared like the mouth of a vast cavern ;
all

all within was impenetrable darkness; while the gloomy yew, which invested the sleeps, rendered it impossible to discover the full extent of this mighty fabric.

As they drew nearer the castle, Margarita thought it might possibly belong to her father, and that a few moments might restore her to her long lost mother. The reserve with which the Baron had always treated her, led her to entertain these hopes.

Several of the servants bore flambeaux before the carriage, while their companions endeavoured to encourage their horses to every exertion of which they were capable. As the light of the torches flashed upon the face of the Baron, who was apparently asleep, Margarita observed, with the utmost astonishment, that his features were agitated, and his cheeks

of a deadly paleness. She still continued to contemplate him, when he opened his eyes, and gazed fearfully around; then striking his hand upon his heart, he threw open the windows of the coach, and forbade his servants to proceed.

“Is it thus,” he exclaimed, “that you observe my directions? did I not charge you, as you valued my favour, to avoid this track? Oh holy heaven!” he added, as he elevated his eyes for a moment to the lofty fabric, “spare me these bitter recollections, remove me from these horrid scenes!” His voice was scarcely articulate; he sighed deeply, and, covering his face with his mantle, he sunk back apparently insensible.

“Let us fly this place,” said the affrighted Margarita; “cannot we discover some track which will extricate us from the mountains?”

“The

“ The road which leads to the valley of Gortze, passes beneath the castle walls,” replied the servants; “ the horses are already spent with fatigue; they cannot return.”

While they waited the commands of the Baron, the wind was heard to rush tempestuously over the woods; and the watch-word from the ramparts of the castle was repeated at regular intervals.

The Baron at length aroused himself as from a dreadful trance;—“ Will you not convey me hence?” he frantically exclaimed—“ do you purpose my ruin?”

“ Ah! it is too horrid!” he added, concealing his face with his hand; “ t’were death to gaze upon it!”

“ May I entreat you, my Lord,” said Margarita, taking his hand, “ to compose yourself; allow your servants to

proceed ; we shall soon reach the village of Gortze. A few hours' repose will restore you to yourself."

The Baron was silent, and his train continued their route.

As they approached the castle, it's situation appeared bolder and more inaccessible ; part of the rock seemed to have been scooped into vaults and caverns, whose iron doors, and narrow grated windows suggested gloomy and terrific images : here and there the hollow rock hung high above the road which wound around the castle ; the beetling towers on it's summits seemed to pierce the clouds ; from their lofty battlements issued the thrilling cries of the bird of night.

They were now beneath the shade of the rugged walls, when the Baron, removing the hand with which he had covered
his

his eyes, uttered the most vehement expressions of rage. His servants, alarmed at his exclamations, stopped the horses, while the Baron, inspired by some distracting thought, burst open the door, and rushed from the carriage. His cheeks were no longer pale, but flushed as with a burning fever; he drew his sword, and, brandishing it in the air, pointed it towards the castle; his eyes seemed to be fixed earnestly on some object; he shook his head; he groaned. "And dost thou threaten me?" he said, in a voice scarcely articulate, while his features were distorted by a ghastly smile; "thou art but a phantom!"

"Let me entreat you to be tranquil, my Lord," said Margarita, who had quitted the carriage to attend her father; "you are overcome by the fatigues which

you have sustained ; allow your servants to conduct you from this place, or perhaps," she added, "you will repose here to-night ? I have no doubt but that the Lord of this mansion will receive you with hospitality."

"Dost thou too combine to complete my ruin?" replied the Baron ; "t'would be death to me to approach those gates."

"Has my Lord an enemy in this castle?" said Margarita with timidity.

"What means that question?" returned the Baron fiercely ; "hast thou penetrated the awful secret ? an enemy didst thou say ? Ah worse than an enemy !" He paused, and starting back, seemed to pursue, with eager and terrific glances, some visionary form.

"Hither ! hither !" he wildly exclaimed, "it winds its silent course. I mark thee

thee well—I know thee well,” he added with a convulsive laugh; “take thy vengeance—I fear thee not!”

His incoherent exclamations were interrupted by Margarita, who besought him, by all that was sacred, to recollect himself. “Permit me, my Lord,” she said, while, with her trembling hand, she clasped his, “to lead you back to your carriage.”

“Who art thou?” exclaimed the Baron, disengaging himself from her, “I know thee not. Dost thou purpose my destruction?”

“Will you not confide in Margarita?” she replied, hastily wiping away the tear which bedewed her pale cheeks.

The Baron gazed upon her, for a moment, with an expression of the wildest horror. “Margarita didst thou say?

am I deceived?" he exclaimed; "No! 'tis the same—long hast thou haunted me—long has thy dreaded image disturbed my repose." As he spoke, he raised his arm, and uttering the most dreadful imprecations, he pointed his sword to her heart.

She shrunk back, and, raising her clasped hands towards him, implored his mercy.

"Would I never had seen thee!" said the Baron fiercely, and attempting with one hand to seize his daughter, while with the other he elevated his sword to terminate her existence; but she avoided the blow, and, flying from her father, directed her course towards the castle.

The Baron would have pursued her, but his attendants interfered; and, having wrested his sword from his hand, they conveyed him back to the carriage.

In

In the meantime Margarita, supposing herself pursued, and terrified by her father's voice as he remonstrated with his servants, had ascended the rocky steps, and had already reached the castle gates, when she was alarmed by the sound of tumultuous festivity from within the walls. She paused; and remembering the Baron's confession, that he apprehended something more than an enemy in the castle, she feared to ask admittance, or implore protection from the danger which immediately threatened her.

For an instant she remained irresolute and perplexed, till the clamour of voices from below again excited her terrors. She imagined that her life could only be secured by an immediate flight; she cast one more glance upon the Gothic portal,

and continued to wind her rapid course over the terrace beneath the castle walls.

The voices of the servants, who wished to lead her back to the Baron, and assure her of her safety, but heightened her alarms.

On the western side of the edifice, the rocky hill declined more gradually into the plain; its steeps were clothed with thick groves of pine and larch, which afforded a shelter to a part of the castle now falling to decay.

It was with difficulty that Margarita could make her way over the briars and underwood, and the masses of rubbish which had been collecting for a length of time; and she was almost spent with fatigue and terror when she reached the porch of a ruined edifice, situated without the castle walls, to which it was connected by

a range of dark towers that seemed to tremble beneath the destructive hand of Time.

A few moments had elapsed before Margarita recovered sufficient composure to reflect upon her wretched situation. The place, in which she had taken refuge, was the entrance of an ancient chapel; by a second door, which stood half open, she advanced into the interior part of the building, whose gloomy and deserted air inspired her agitated mind with a degree of superstitious awe to which she had hitherto been a stranger. She traversed the aisles with trembling steps, and approached the altar.—“ Here,” she said, endeavouring to arm herself with fortitude, “ I am under the more immediate protection of Heaven.”

The pale light of the moon streamed through the broken windows, and dimly shewed the rich carvings of the altar-piece. The chapel was more entire on that side which adjoined to the castle; the pointed arch and sculptured roof displayed a specimen of former magnificence, while many of the monuments were still entire. One, in particular, attracted the observation of Margarita: it was the figure of a Knight in black armour, fixed upon a lofty pedestal, in the front of which was a tablet of ebony. The inscription was almost entirely effaced. She gazed upon the figure, for an instant, in silent admiration; but her thoughts soon recurred to her own situation—she sighed, and the tears trickled down her cheeks.

A sudden blast of wind swept through the deserted aisles; and as the clouds passed
over

over the moon, the silver light faded from the darkened scene.

Margarita sunk on her knees before the altar; she implored the protection of Heaven in silent prayer; she entreated that her sufferings might be terminated, or that, if they were necessary for her good, she might be enabled to submit to them. With fortitude she arose; the light was restored, and the rushing of the wind no longer heard; the distant sound of footsteps and of voices was, however, at intervals wafted to her ear; they seemed to approach, and Margarita, still dreading the effects of her father's fury, looked around for some deeper shade, in which she might conceal herself, when, turning towards the monument, her failing senses seemed to reject their own testimony;—the tomb appeared to gape before her; she

she started back —“ 'Tis but a delusion, 'tis impossible !” she frantically exclaimed. She looked again ; she still beheld the same horrid object ; it gradually opened wider ; somewhat within evidently moved. Oh dreadful !” she exclaimed, while terror for a moment gave her strength ; she wildly flew through the aisles, and, before she had reached the gate, sunk senseless on the pavement.

In this state she was found by her father's servants, who carried her back to the coach. When she recovered her senses, she found herself seated by the Baron, who was supporting her in his arms, and contemplating her with an expression of the utmost paternal affection. She had, however, suffered too much to be able to conceal the terror with which his presence,
and

and the remembrance of what she had seen in the chapel, inspired her.

The Baron Rhodolpho observed her agitation ; and imagining that he knew but too well what passed in her mind, used every means to console and re-assure her. He entreated her to pardon and forget the late events, and promised her his future favour and protection.

It was with the utmost joy that Margarita found herself every moment more distant from that scene of dread in which she had been recently engaged, and the recollection of which, as her reason returned, became every instant more perplexing. When they arrived at the village of Gortze, which was not till the night was far advanced, she excused herself to the Baron, and retired immediately to her apartment.

When

When she found herself alone, the tomb and all its horrors again presented itself to her imagination. She was unable to sleep, and the solitude of her chamber became insupportable to her. She arose, and, opening the casement, listened to the voices of the servants in the apartments below.

The village was situated at the foot of the mountains.

Margarita could easily distinguish the heights on which the castle stood ; the dark towers themselves were visible as they arose above the encircling woods. The wind blew cold and tempestuous ; clouds obscured the heavens. She at length retired to her bed, and fell into a troubled sleep, from which she often awoke with a start of terror.

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

MARGARITA arose some time before the Baron was prepared to continue his journey ; and, while her mind was wholly occupied by it's horrid and mysterious inhabitant, her eyes were directed to the castle, now more distinctly seen by the morning light. The rock upon which it was erected, appeared steeper and more inaccessible on this side than the other, and hung stupendously over the valley, presenting to the view vast and immeasurable caverns, from the largest of which
an

an amazing cataract rushed into the plain below. The valley was thinly interspersed with low cabins thatched with sedges. The peasants were at work, at their doors, in habits of coarse cloth, with caps and tippets of grey fur. The encircling mountains, now white with the snow which had fallen during the night, were covered almost to their summits with woods of Norway pine.

It was not without some degree of terror that Margarita received a summons to appear before her father. As soon as she entered his apartment, he closed the door, and taking her hand, placed her beside him. His countenance was softened into a degree of mildness, which she had not often observed in him; and he addressed her with melancholy indeed, but with an air of gentleness and affection. “ In a few hours,

hours, Margarita," he said, " we shall reach Hartz Caffel ; and this evening you will probably see the Baronefs."

" The Baronefs !" she repeated in faltering accents

" A deep veil of sorrow," continued the Baron, " has darkened our existence ; bitter, bitter indeed, has been our portion."

" Heaven permit," returned Margarita, " that I may afford you some slight consolation—that I may in some degree alleviate your grief !"

" 'Tis impossible," said the Baron.

" Impossible !" she repeated ; " the presence of a daughter—a daughter whose only wish will be to promote her happiness, must at least be soothing to a mother."

" A mother !" said the Baron, in an angry tone ; " Margarita," he added,

" I

" I fear that you have little discretion ; that you always speak and act from the impulse of the moment."

" Never, my Lord," she replied, while the tear trembled in her eye, " will I again be guilty of a fault of this nature."

" I know," returned the Baron, somewhat softened, " that I have imposed a severe task upon you. If your imprudence should at some future time prove injurious to me, I will take the punishment as my due."

" The Holy Virgin forbid that I should ever injure my benefactor !" she replied.

" Benefactor !" repeated the Baron, with a deep sigh ; " I have not merited that title. If I once preserved you from one who perhaps sought even your life, I was yesterday about to sacrifice it. Oh

Margarita !

Margarita ! I was not then master of myself ; the agonies which I then endured, I pray Heaven that you may never experience !”

Margarita perceived the agitation of her father, and entreated that the past might be buried in oblivion.

“ Generous child !” exclaimed the Baron, “ can you forget it ? can you resolve never to mention it ? much depends upon it’s concealment. I have required from my servants an oath of secrecy, but with Margarita I trust that oaths are superfluous ; pity for the unfortunate will bind her to eternal silence.” As he ceased to speak, he took her hand, and led her to the coach.

As the Baron Rhodolpho with his train continued their route through the snow, which was not as yet so deep as to impede
their

their journey, Margarita often looked back with united terror and admiration on the mountains gradually diminishing to her view. About midday they descended into a valley, through which rolled a small yet rapid river, whose banks, already encrusted with ice, were shaded by small woods of fir; the road wound near the course of the river for some leagues, and towards the close of the day descended into a deep and shadowy glen.

“ In less than an hour,” said the Baron, “ we shall reach Hartz Cassel.”

Margarita felt her heart palpitate as he uttered these words;—“ In less than an hour,” she repeated, “ I may see the Baroness.”

The evening was cold; the Baron wrapped his ermine cloak around him, and rested

rested his head against the side of the coach.

Margarita endeavoured to compose the agitation which the prospect of so soon seeing her mother had occasioned. In vain her father had said that she could afford her no comfort. Nature seemed to contradict the assertion; she drew the picture of her parents from it's case, and contemplated with delight the engaging and beautiful countenance of her mother, on whose imaginary affection she now reposed her only hope of happiness; and with what reluctance does the young mind abandon it's last resource!

She had long been a prey to sorrow; her lot had been singularly unfortunate, yet still did she flatter herself that happier days were now at hand, and that the parent, whom some inauspicious circumstance

stance had compelled to separate herself from her child, would rejoice in her restoration, and bless that fostering hand by which her infant was preserved. She formed, in her lively imagination, her mother, as beautiful, if not as young as the painting represented her, watching the return of her Lord through the dark foliage of the pines, with which she conceived the castle to be surrounded ; she fancied she could see the tear, which at their approach would tremble in her eye, and hear her melodious voice as she called upon her Margarita.

“ But may I not address her by the endearing title of Parent ?” she asked herself ; “ perhaps not in the presence of my father ; but if she will in private acknowledge her child, I will be content.”

Hurried

Hurried on by the perturbation of her spirits, she pursued still farther this dream of delight. She had forgotten the lesson which she had given her beloved Albert at Ermengarda, and allowed herself to indulge hopes of happiness, which a moment's reflection would have taught her were visionary.

The train at length emerged from the deep wood, and continued to wind through the valley. Margarita could now discern the stately groves of pine, beech, and chestnut which crowned the surrounding hills, and hear the rushing of the torrent, which tumbled from the highlands, and swept through the depths of the vale; on the opposite side of which, in an amphitheatre, formed by the woods, stands Hartz Cassel. This majestic edifice, proudly rearing itself amid the woods, seemed to defy the ravages

of time; the rude architecture, and the shapeless figures graven on the flinty walls, bespoke it the work of ancient days.

“ As the carriage crossed a stone bridge, which was thrown over the torrent, a horn was sounded from the ramparts of the Castle. The Baron instantly roused himself from his apparent sleep, and gazing around him for some moments, folded his arms, and remained silent.

Margarita trembled; the enchanting dreams of happiness which she had so lately indulged, at once vanished, and were succeeded by the most painful sense of her present situation.

The coach passed beneath an arched gateway into a paved court of a circular form. Margarita alighted, and was led by an ample flight of steps into the great hall,

hall, the roof of which was supported by pillars of carved stone.

“Where is your Lady?” said the Baron, addressing himself to his servants, who were ranged on either side the hall; and, without waiting their reply, he conducted his daughter into an adjoining apartment, whose gloomy magnificence bespoke the disposition of its owner.

“Remain here a few moments, Margarita,” said the Baron; “I shall soon return.”

“May I not be permitted to see the Baroness?” she asked in tremulous accents.

“I must prepare her for the interview,” he replied.

“Is any preparation requisite?” exclaimed Margarita. Her father made no answer, but retiring hastily, closed the

door after him. When left alone, she remained for some moments absorbed in the most painful reflections ; she was almost exhausted by the fatigue and anxiety which she had endured ; she uttered several incoherent exclamations, and throwing herself upon a chair, yielded, without restraint, to her grief.

A considerable length of time had elapsed, and the Baron did not appear. Margarita became every moment more restless and uneasy ; she arose, and opened the door of the apartment, but no one was seen in the hall, no voice interrupted the deep silence. She returned, and, throwing herself again on the chair, explored, with eager and searching eyes, every part of the room. Her curiosity was at length excited by the portrait of a lady ; as she approached it, she instantly perceived it to
bear

bear a very strong resemblance to the picture of her mother, which she had so often contemplated with delight. Urged now by the strongest motives, she took a waxen taper from one of the chandeliers, and raised it towards the head of the portrait.

This little incident suddenly recalled to her remembrance an event which had taken place at Ormund Cassel, and of the mysterious tale of the ill-fated lady. Her mind, at that time prepared to receive and cherish painful images, was for some moments employed in vague and groundless conjecture, till reason, at length, recovering it's former influence, she became more composed.

Upon a more accurate examination of the painting, the resemblance of the features to that of the miniature appeared

more striking ; but there was something in the appearance of the larger figure which inspired her with new and almost insupportable apprehensions. The eyes, which in one seemed animated with gaiety, were in the other expressive only of the deepest sorrow, while despair was traced on every feature.

“ If this is a true representation of my mother,” exclaimed Margarita, “ I have indeed nothing to hope.” As she uttered these words, she replaced the taper, and, returning to the chair, remained for some time overwhelmed with grief and horror. The clock had twice tolled from the turrets of the castle before the Baron returned, followed by his chaplain, a priest of an austere and gloomy aspect.

“ The Baroness is prepared to see you, Margarita,” said her father.

“ The

“ The Baroness !” repeated Margarita, arising with a wild and disorderly air ;
“ Ah ! I will throw myself at her feet, and implore her pity.”

“ Wherefore this agitation, Margarita ?” said the Baron, gazing with solicitude on her pale countenance. “ As you love me,” he added, “ endeavour to compose yourself ; be assured you have nothing to fear. I will leave you a few minutes ; when you are more tranquil, I will see you again.”

After the departure of her father, Margarita remained almost in a state of insensibility, till Bertha, an attendant of the Baroness, entered the apartment, bringing her some refreshment.

The soothing voice and kind attentions of Bertha soon recalled her wandering senses, and she at length became suffi-

ciently tranquil to inquire after the health of her lady, and to excuse her own present indisposition under the pretence of having endured extreme fatigue.

“ I have received orders,” returned Bertha, “ when you find yourself well enough, to conduct you to my Lady, who wishes to see you.”

Margarita, hoping to oblige her parents by a prompt acquiescence with their will, resolved to delay the dreaded interview no longer. She instantly arose, and followed Bertha through the hall into a long gallery, at the end of which was the apartment where the Barons waited her arrival. “ How different,” Margarita thought, “ is this cold and gloomy formality to those delightful transports with which I had fondly hoped she would have received her child !”

As

As their steps were heard in the gallery, the door, by which it was terminated, was thrown open by the chaplain, who advanced to take the hand of Margarita, motioning at the same time to Bertha to retire.

The neglected air and Gothic ornaments of the apartment into which she was conducted, passed wholly unregarded by her ; all her faculties were absorbed in one object—it was the figure of the Baroness. Her robes of black velvet flowed on the ground, and her face, half concealed by folds of crape, rested upon the arm of her Lord. She was evidently much agitated ; she trembled, and frequently heaved deep sighs.

Margarita approached her parents with disordered steps. As she drew near them,

she stopped, and hastily wiped away the tear which glistened in her eyes.

The Baroness raised her head to gaze upon her, and discovered the pale remains of ruined beauty, ghastly with terror, and haggard with suffering.

Margarita shrunk back with an involuntary emotion of horror.

As the eyes of the Baroness met those of her daughter, she shrieked wildly, and sunk into the arms of the Baron.

“ Oh my mother!” exclaimed Margarita, springing forwards, and falling on her knees before her, “ if ever your maternal arms have supported the infant Margarita—if ever you have pressed your babe to your heart, or shed one tear for her hapless doom, now regard her with pity, console your long lost child with one approving smile !”

The Baroness raised her head, cast a fearful glance on her daughter, and fainted.

Margarita instantly recollected her solemn promise, and deplored the error of which she had been guilty. She held the cold hand of her mother within her's, and hung over her in silent grief. As she removed her veil to give her air, she thought she could trace the sad remains of those beautiful features, on the resemblance of which she had often gazed with the sweetest hope. That expression of benevolence, which had been the source of so many visionary schemes of happiness, was now for ever fled ; and the frowns of care, and wrinkles of a premature old age had succeeded the enchanting smiles and bloom of youth.

While Margarita considered, with deep anxiety, what dreadful event could have

occasioned this frightful change, the Baroness opened her eyes, and fixed them upon her daughter.

“ Take her, take her from me !” she exclaimed, rising impetuously from her seat ; “ what new horrors disturb my repose ? dreadful phantom ! hideous illusion ! will nothing avail—must I for ever be harassed by these terrible appearances ?”

“ Peace, Madam,” said the Baron, “ you forget yourself ; where are those solemn promises ?”

“ Did she not call me her mother ?” added the Baroness ; “ idle mockery ! wherefore those prayers, wherefore those years of penitence and mortification ?”

“ For Heaven’s sake be tranquil !” said the Baron, sternly.

“ Dost thou reproach me ?” she replied with a ghastly smile ; “ hast thou forgotten
forgotten

forgotten that night?—Ah! I well remember it—these hands were stained—see, see these are the marks—they are still red—crimson!”

Are you distracted?” exclaimed the Baron, with extreme agitation. “Margarita,” he added, “may I trust you? retire to your apartment, and, as you love me, conceal what has passed.”

He instantly conducted her into the hall, and delivered her to the care of Bertha.

CHAP. IV.

MARGARITA was conducted by Bertha to the apartment which had been appointed for her. It was an extensive chamber opening into a stone gallery which surrounded the hall, and terminated by an oriel, which recalled a thousand painful recollections to her mind. The compassion of Bertha was now her only consolation ; but while she received her services with gratitude, she endeavoured, in obedience to her father's injunctions, to conceal her distress.

“ I am

“ I am fatigued,” she said ; “ I will retire to rest.”

“ Alas ! Madam,” replied Bertha, “ you do indeed seem to be weary ; this is a melancholy place too for so young a lady. You will soon learn to bewail the day when you came here.”

“ I hope not,” said Margarita, with a faint smile.

During the greater part of the night she found herself too much agitated to sleep. The gloomy figure of her mother constantly presented itself to her imagination ; and she recollected, with extreme horror, the reception which she had given her. She could only reflect on the past events of her life with regret ; and in her present prospect all was dark and hopeless. At length, overpowered by extreme weariness, she sunk into a profound sleep, from
which

which she did not awake, till at the dawn of day Bertha returned to her apartment.

“The Holy Virgin be praised, my lady,” she said, “that I see you better this morning! Indeed I feared very much for you last night.”

Margarita thanked her for her kind solitude, and inquired after the Baroness.

“My Lady!” returned Bertha, “alas! she has little enjoyment of life; she has been, for a length of years, in the most melancholy state. She never weeps ’tis true, but she delights in every thing that is sad, and will exclude herself for whole days from all society.”

“And what can be the occasion of this?” said Margarita.

“Heaven knows!” she replied; “some of the domestics say that she has never recovered the loss of her children.”

“Her

“ Her children ?” repeated Margarita.

“ Yes,” continued Bertha ; “ but others say, that she was even more gloomy while they lived. I have often heard my father, who lives in the neighbouring hamlet, talk over these things with my mother.

“ This castle had been deserted for many years, and was only inhabited by a few old servants, when suddenly—I was then but a child—the Baron and Baroness paid a short visit to the castle, and commanded that it should be repaired for their reception. Their orders were obeyed ; but they allowed many more years to elapse before their return. During that interval it is supposed, that my Lord and Lady had suffered many afflictions—but you weep,” said Bertha, suddenly interrupting herself ; “ are you not well ?”

“ I thank

“ I thank you,” replied Margarita, “ I am very well. At present, however, I should wish to be alone ; and at some future period I will hear more of this story.”

When Bertha withdrew, Margarita endeavoured to compose herself; she arose, and having recommended herself to the protection of Heaven, went into the oriel, to which she felt herself already attached, from a fancied resemblance which it bore to that in which she had spent so many happy hours. The sun had just arisen above a grove of pines, whose dark branches bent beneath the weight of the snow, which had fallen in great quantities during the night. A few lonely cottages were seen on the heights, and others, more remote, were only discoverable by the
thick

thick smoke of newly kindled fires, which curled high in the clear expanse of air.

Some feet above the cascade, which fell from a lofty rock into the dingle, a rude bridge of a single pine was thrown over the torrent, upon which an old man was passing with slow and feeble steps. Margarita watched him till he had quitted the narrow bridge, where every blast seemed to threaten his destruction ; and when he had reached the door of his cabin, she directed her eyes towards the other side of the oriel, where she could discern the woods forming a vast semicircle above the castle. She could there mark the eagle and the kite, soaring high above the trees, or darting down upon some solitary animal whose hardier nature had hitherto resisted the attacks of cold.

The

The red-deer bounded on the snow, scarcely marking the smooth surface with its light step.

As Margarita contemplated these beautiful and tranquil scenes, the violent emotions of grief, which she had so lately experienced, were mellowed into a more soothing melancholy, in the indulgence of which she seemed to take delight.

The sun was already high in the heavens, when she received a summons from the Baron to appear at breakfast. She descended the stairs with trembling steps, and was received at the door of the apartment by her father, whose assumed reserve but ill concealed his real affection.

The Baroness silently inclined her head. When Margarita approached, she seemed to be constrained, by the presence of her
Lord,

Lord, to suppress her emotions; but her whole frame was agitated with tremors, and her eyes were never fixed on her daughter but with an expression of horror.

During the repast no one seemed desirous to interrupt the deep silence. The chaplain would sometimes, indeed, make a remark; but it was of such a nature, as a mind, tinged by gloom, and darkened by superstition alone, would dictate. From this dreadful restraint the Baroness at length released Margarita by quitting the room.

The Baron, when left alone with his daughter, addressed her with kindness, and expressed a wish that he could procure her some amusement which would enliven the lonely hours. "I will take you, Margarita," he said, "into my library; where,

where, if you are fond of reading, you may entertain yourself."

The slightest testimony of affection from her father, to whom she already began to feel herself attached, was a healing balm to her wounded heart; she arose, and followed him to the library.

It was in one of the most remote parts of the castle, and was embellished by the works of the finest artists of the day.

"Hither," said the Baron, "I retire from society to taste the delights of solitude; and here I shall, at any time, rejoice to see Margarita. It will then be in my power to point out to her those books most proper for her perusal."

She would have thanked him, but she was unable; and turned aside to conceal her agitation.

The

The Baron withdrew to another part of the room, and seemed not to observe her distress.

When she was a little more composed, he selected several French and Italian authors; and as he presented them to her, he took occasion to ask her what had been the general tendency of her studies under the tuition of Canon Bernardo?

Although Margarita was affected by the question, yet she would not lose so propitious an opportunity of interesting her father in favour of her beloved Canon. She soon became animated by the theme, and gave such an account of her education, and the happiness of her early life, that the tear glistened in the eyes of the Baron Rhodolpho.

“Would to Heaven, my child,” he replied, “that you would enable me to restore

restore you to those beloved friends with whom you were formerly so happy. But the conditions by which you must procure your liberty, are such as I fear you will never submit to. Can you resolve," he added, looking affectionately upon her, "to sacrifice an unworthy attachment, which can only be productive of misery?"

"Is this the condition?" she exclaimed, "is this the price of my liberty? Oh my Lord! wherefore should you require such a sacrifice? Albert is indeed of ignoble birth, but he is truly amiable."

"Peace," said the Baron, hastily interrupting her, "I brook not any expostulation on this subject. The alternative is now offered you, either to relinquish for ever all thoughts of the indigent youth, and, by a ready acquiescence with my will, to merit every favour which it is in my

power to bestow, or, by an obstinate perseverance, to incur perpetual confinement." He paused, but the expression of her countenance did not give him any hopes of her submission.

The Baron now became more earnest, and used every argument which was calculated to affect a youthful mind. He led her to the window of the apartment, from which nothing was seen but the hills which rose above the castle, crowned with groves of pine.

"You are in the bloom of youth, Margarita," he said, "nor can you be ignorant that you possess a degree of beauty rarely seen. With every elegance which can entitle you to be the ornament of your sex, and the delight of your friends, can you determine to renounce the world, to bury yourself in the depths of

solitude, and waste your melancholy hours unregarded and neglected? Will you prefer the society of the most wretched of beings, to whom your presence can afford no consolation, to the beloved friends of your childhood? Will you chuse perpetual captivity, rather than bind yourself by an oath to think no more of Albert?"

She sighed, but made no reply.

The Baron seemed irritated by her perseverance. "If such, Margarita, is your resolution," he added, "be prepared for the worst. The heavy winter will soon pass away, and spring, with all her fragrance, will return; but your bondage can have no end. Those cloud-topped hills must ever bound your view; Hartz Cassel must become your prison. I dare not give you any other hope."

The

The Baron paused, and perceiving that the countenance of his daughter was expressive of the deepest sorrow—"Ah! Margarita, my child!" he said, "you hate me; you cannot conceal it; you accuse me of acting from caprice; but Heaven is my witness that your happiness is dear to me as life!"

Margarita here interrupted her father; and while she entreated him not to entertain a doubt of her affection, she assured him that she was convinced that he would not wantonly destroy her peace.

"Beloved Margarita!" exclaimed the Baron, "can you think thus generously of me? 'Tis more than I have merited; and yet could you know all, could you know what I have suffered, you would pity, you might even be induced to pardon

don me. Oh holy Heaven!" he added, "into what an abyfs of misery am I plunged—an abyfs from which thou alone canst extricate me;—but you are distressed, Margarita," said the Baron, suddenly recollecting himself, "retire to your apartment; another day I will receive you with more compofure."

When Margarita reached her own chamber, ſhe threw herſelf on a chair overwhelmed with grief. She no longer entertained a hope of being releaſed and reſtored to her friends; ſhe pictured to herſelf year after year waſted in that mournful retreat, varied only by the changing ſeaſons.

The Canon and Chriſtina exiſted no longer for her. Albert, ſhe thought, might for a time lament her loſs; but he, who had once forgotten her at Roſend-hall

hall Castle, would, she imagined, if possible, seek some other comforter; "and can I wish it otherwise?" she said, with a deep sigh; "Why should I desire Albert to be a partaker of my wretchedness?"

From these painful reflections she was roused by her attendants, who came to inform her that dinner was prepared. The repast was magnificent; a large train of domestics, most richly attired, waited in the hall; every thing bespoke the high rank and opulence of the Baron Rhodolpho. But the innocent cheerfulness of Ermengarda, the easy grace of Rosendhall Castle, and the kind attentions of the poor Nun, were alike wanting. Deep gloom shaded every countenance, and the steps of the servants alone relieved the oppressive silence.

The features of the Baroness were not once animated by a smile; and in her presence her Lord appeared unusually morose and reserved.

In the same unvaried course of gloom passed away a great part of the winter months. Margarita spent many hours each day in the library of the Baron; but after a time she perceived that he did not take the delight he once had done in her presence—his mind seemed entirely absorbed by some painful thought; he would remain for a length of time with his arms folded, and his eyes fixed on the ground.

The Baroness still avoided her daughter, and, when constrained to be in her presence, betrayed emotions of grief and horror.

Margarita,

Margarita, in the meantime, had but too strongly imbibed the dreadful infection. Although her heart was not rent by the consciousness of any secret guilt, all the innocent gaiety of youth had subsided; her eyes no longer sparkled with animation, and the bloom of health had faded from her cheeks. For some weeks after her arrival, she had in vain endeavoured to conciliate the affection of her mother; she had tried every method which filial piety could suggest, but without success; she at length relinquished all hope, and with hope she lost her former activity; she took little pleasure in reading, unless it were those books which seemed to partake her melancholy, and to express all her own feelings.

History, in which she once delighted, could interest her no longer. "What

have I to do with the busy world?" she would exclaim, as she threw aside it's annals with disgust.

The last faint prospect of liberty had been long excluded from her mind by her father, who once, in the most affecting and expressive manner, assured her, that should she attempt to escape from the castle without his knowledge, his life would probably be the forfeiture.

As Margarita had no reason to doubt the Baron's assertions, she prepared herself for that captivity which she thought could be terminated only by a concession which she could not persuade herself to make. She would often contemplate, from the windows of her apartment, those hills which were for ever to be the boundary of her view; she would listen for hours to the wind, murmuring amid the

the distant woods, or the rush of the mountain torrent. The remembrance of past scenes of happiness at Ermengarda or the venerable Canonry, now seemed like a faint and delusive dream. She recollected the many extraordinary events to which she had been witness; but she no longer entertained a wish to unravel those mysteries, which had once so strongly excited her curiosity.

Her mind had sunk into a state of apathy, from which she conceived that nothing would have power to rouse her.

It was in the beginning of the month of March, that the Baron informed his family he proposed to take a journey, from which he did not think it would be possible to return for many weeks. He entreated Margarita to be attentive,

during his absence, to the Barones, to whom he made the same request in behalf of her daughter.

Margarita trembled to be left almost alone with her mother, from whom she no longer hoped an increase of kindness. Hearing the Baron, on the day previous to his intended departure, mention Vienna, she ventured to request him to convey a letter to the Canon ; to which he gave a peremptory refusal. “ No,” he said, “ the Canon must not know where you are.”

“ At least,” said Margarita, “ permit me to inform him that I am well.”

Her father denied this request, and reminded her that his life might be endangered by any act of imprudence on her part.

On

On the following morning, after the Baron had taken leave of his family, he took the hand of his daughter, and led her into the great hall. "Margarita," he said after a momentary pause, "the dangers I have incurred by admitting you into my family, are such as I cannot reflect upon without the utmost dread. Were my life only at stake, I should feel less anxiety; but my reputation, all I hold most dear, depends upon a slender thread, the caprice of a tyrant, from the anger of whom I have every thing to fear;—he commands me to retain you in the severest bondage. If, in consequence of my lenity towards you, you should make your escape, this wretched being, whom you once called your father, who once preserved you, although you were scarcely conscious of it, from the most dreadful misery with which you

were threatened in that fatal fortress, would be exposed to miseries too terrible for recital.

“ Ah ! beloved and injured child,” he added, “ you weep—you pity me. I exact no promise, I rely upon your honour, and I leave you without fear.”

Margarita sighed ; the Baron embraced her, and rushed towards the castle-gates where his attendants waited his presence.

CHAP.

CHAP. V.

“WHAT hand,” exclaimed Margarita, as she hastened to her own chamber to conceal her grief, “can have woven this web of horror, in which the innocent and the guilty are alike entangled? When—when shall I extricate myself from these miseries?” She advanced to the oriel, and, throwing open the casement to receive the air, she beheld her father’s train winding slowly through the vale. The number of his attendants, the magnificence of his.

his equipage were in her eyes but an irritating mockery, the trappings of slavery.

The snow had already begun to melt from the hills, and the earth was again variegated with the delicate tints of the early spring; but the unhappy daughter of Rhodolpho beheld not these beauties with pleasure—they only seemed to remind her of joys for ever past, and to awaken her to a lively sense of her present hopeless situation.

The young fawn, lightly tripping beneath the waving branches of the pine and chestnut, seemed to her but an emblem of that liberty to which she could never aspire. With what different emotions would she have contemplated these objects in happier times! but melancholy, like some pernicious insects, sucks venom from the sweetest flowers.

How

How far unlike seems the snowy feather, which waves on the brow of some lovely female, to the sad plume nodding on the hearse ! and yet, are they not the same ? the stately ostrich affords them both. Where then is their difference ? the sparkling glance of joy beholds the one, the sickly eye of sorrow contemplates the other.

On the morning subsequent to that of her father's departure, Margarita, finding herself unusually dejected, entreated Bertha to accompany her as she walked towards the forest.

“ My Lady,” said Bertha, as they descended into the court, “ the Baroness is at present engaged ; and if you please, I will shew you the chapel, which is situated in that part of the castle which is particularly appropriated to her.”

Margarita

Margarita consented, and Bertha led her into a low gallery of carved wood, at the extremity of which they descended by several steps into a small chapel. Over the altar-piece was a crucifix of gold, and on one side, upon a pedestal of white marble, was a small urn inscribed to the memory of the infant children of the Baron Rholpho.

Margarita contemplated this object till the tear trembled in her eye, and trickled down her cheek. The character of her mother and her own history seemed every moment to become more mysterious and perplexed.

“Is it not extraordinary,” she at length said, endeavouring to recover herself, “that I should never have been brought here before?”

“Not

“ Not at all, my Lady,” replied Bertha, “ as the Baroness is not willing that any one should enter the chapel.”

“ If that is the case,” said Margarita, “ we will instantly retire.”

“ The Baroness is at present employed in the library ; she will not immediately return to her apartments,” replied Bertha.

Notwithstanding her assurances, Margarita had withdrawn several paces towards the door, when she stopped to look once more on the monumental urn.

“ Alas !” said Bertha, “ how often does the Baroness weep over that urn ! she will watch by it, as I am told, hour after hour.”

“ Indeed !” said Margarita with a sigh. “ How many children has she lost ?”

“ Several,” returned Bertha ; “ but all I presume in their infancy.”

“ Many

“ Many years are elapsed I suppose since their death !” added Margarita.

Bertha replied, that she could give her no information, as these were subjects never mentioned in the castle.

“ This is extraordinary,” said Margarita ; “ and yet,” she added, with an assumed indifference, “ it is better to forget past afflictions.”

“ The Holy Virgin !” exclaimed Bertha, “ did I not hear a step ? It is that of the Baroness—let us retire.”—Scarcely had she uttered these words, when the Baroness appeared. She at first seemed surprised at seeing her daughter, but soon recollecting herself, she motioned to Bertha to retire, at the same time entreating Margarita to stay a few moments.

“ I fear,

“ I fear, Madam,” said Margarita, as she approached her mother, “ that I have intruded ; but it was from ignorance.”

“ I am a poor melancholy being,” said the Baroness, concealing her face with her handkerchief, “ and am unable to perform my duty towards you as I could wish ; but if you should like to visit me sometimes in my own apartments, you shall be willingly admitted. Yet wherefore do I invite you ? my society can afford you little pleasure, my books are not such as would interest you, nor is it in my power to enter into gay conversation.

Margarita kissed the hand of the Baroness, and thanked her for her kindness.

For the present she retired ; and in the evening, after a repast, partaken with the usual

usual silence, she followed the Baronefs to her apartment.

It was a lofty chamber, and seemed, from it's situation, to be over the chapel which she had visited in the morning. Here indeed was the region of Melancholy, in which Art had exerted her utmost powers to gratify the gloomy taste of the Baronefs.

The ceiling represented the concave of heaven blackened with tempest; the masterly hand of the painter had delineated the sun no longer shedding it's enlivening rays on the encircling orbs, but reflecting an angry and fiery glow from it's bloody disk.

The walls of the apartment were hung with the works of the most skilful artists; but these paintings rather augmented than diminished the universal gloom, since they represented

represented only the miseries and imperfections attendant on mortality.

The first mother of mankind was seen lamenting her fallen state : her beautiful eyes were elevated to heaven, and her hands were clasped in deep despair to her heart ;—in another tablet she appears pale with grief, and trembling beneath the blast of winter ; the flowers have drooped their delicate heads, the trees have lost the rich foliage which so lately adorned them. In her hand she grasps the first victim of death, a dove pierced by the talons of an eagle ; she presses it's blood-stained body to her bosom ; she in vain endeavours to warm it's cold limbs ; her inquiring eyes seem to say, “ Is this death ? ”

Other paintings represent the venerable Jacob lamenting the supposed death of his best beloved child ; David hearkening
in

in silent anguish to the rebukes of the Holy Prophet; and Solomon fallen from his glory into the depths of remorse.

At the upper end of the room was an arched recess hung with black velvet, within which, upon a marble table, was placed a coffin covered with a fable pall.

Above the table was a painting as large as life, exhibiting the first murderer. The youthful Abel lay at his brother's feet, in the words of an ancient poet, "like a fair flower lately plucked, that has not as yet contracted it's painted foliage, nor ceased to shed it's native fragrance;" his cheeks still bloomed with beauty, his eyes were closed, and his yellow locks besmeared with blood.

In the countenance of Cain, all the fierce passions which had urged him to the dreadful act, were blended with horror
and

and remorse, while his lips were yet distorted with the sneer of triumphant malice.

The Baroness approached the recess; she raised the pall, and knelt beside the coffin. "The greatest monarch that Europe has long known," she said, "has done the same."

Margarita heaved a deep sigh; and while she contemplated the dreadful scene, her mind was employed in unavailing conjecture, and she now began to admit a frightful suspicion that some deed of guilt had reduced her mother to that wretched state.

"Oh! how unlike is all this," she thought, "to the cheering views of religion given me by the Canon!" She represented to herself the figure of her beloved preceptor, when, with a smiling countenance,

tenance, he would describe his conceptions of the christian character always cheerful, benevolent and merciful as himself. He loved to promise the immortal joys of Heaven to the penitent, while menaces and denunciations were seldom found in his texts.

During her daily visits to the Baroness, Margarita employed herself in reading those books which her mother recommended to her. The gloomy and superstitious doctrines which they inculcated, added to the melancholy scenes to which she was constantly witness, imperceptibly gained an ascendancy over her mind; while her desire of paying every attention to the Baroness excluded her in a great measure from the pleasure she might have derived from exploring the beautiful scenes which surrounded Hartz Cassel.

Her

Her unceasing efforts to please were not, however, lost upon her mother, who began gradually to relax from her severity towards her daughter. She would sometimes even enter into conversation with her, and would endeavour to eradicate from her mind those opinions which she imagined to be erroneous. Gloomy indeed as were her views of life, the unhappy Baronefs, in death only, looked for a frightful aggravation of her sufferings.

“ I have seen but little of the world,” said Margarita one evening to her mother, “ yet as far as I am capable of forming a judgment, the sorrows endured by the virtuous are far overbalanced by the happiness which they enjoy.”

“ Poor child !” exclaimed the Baronefs, “ how art thou deceived ! Alas ! with what fond prepossessions we enter the

flowery paths of early life ! Pleasure erects her airy pavilion before our eyes, and in the distant perspective Ambition marks the gilded palace and exalted dome ; we rush forwards eager to possess the glittering prize, and while we think it within our grasp, the phantom is for ever fled.

“ For a moment we sink in despair, till youthful hope again arises in our breasts, and again excites us to action. 'Tis no longer in splendour and gaiety we seek for happiness ; we have already proved the fallacy of these views, and, less ambitious, though equally presumptuous, we pursue a serener path ;—we cultivate friendships, we form attachments, and, in the first moments of ecstacy, we promise ourselves long years of peace, and days unnumbered passed in calm delights. But how soon the scene is changed ! The friends,
in

in whom we most trusted, betray our confidence, and the dearest objects of our love are torn from us by death.

“ The enchanting dream of joy is faded away, and our minds are again overwhelmed with grief; we shrink from all society, and retire into solitude. Here, at least, we shall find repose, and here we promise ourselves at least a negative happiness, an exemption from pain. But ah, vain and foolish mortal !” added the Baroness, “ sickness prowls around thy couch, and awakens thee from thy momentary security. Worn with the attacks of age, and racked upon the bed of pain, thou art at length constrained to declare that happiness is not decreed for man.”

“ Ah frightful !” exclaimed Margarita.

“ Frightful as it is,” replied the Baroness, “ I would the representation were not just !”

Margarita sighed.

“ If you tremble at this view of life,” continued her mother, “ what would you suffer should I describe what passes in the mind of those who are conscious of a life of guilt ?—Ah ! I could paint it in the strongest colours !” she added in a troubled voice ; “ the dread remembrance of an evil act darkens our brightest days, and deadens the heart to the sweetest affections.”

As she uttered these words, she observed the tears which trembled in the eyes of her daughter. “ ’Tis late, my child,” she added, as she extended her hand towards her ; “ retire to rest, and may Heaven bless you !”

Margarita

Margarita obeyed ; but the gloomy picture of life, which the Baroneſs had delineated, preſented ſo many images of horror to her mind, that ſhe found herſelf unable to enjoy any reſoſe.

Her extreme languor and dejection were not unobſerved by Bertha when ſhe entered her apartment on the following morning ; who, thinking that it might be a means of reſtoring her Lady to health, propoſed that ſhe ſhould take the air in the woods above the caſtle, to which Margarita conſented.

As ſoon as ſhe had concluded a ſlight reſaſt with the Baroneſs, ſhe called her kind attendant, and they deſcended together into the courts of the caſtle.

The gates were unbarred by the porter, and Bertha led her Lady into the park, where the delicate offspring of the timid

hind, exulting in the spring of life, often skipped across their path, or bounded in light gambols before them. The air was perfumed by the fragrant breath of the tufted primrose and azure violet.

They had already ascended the heights which elevated themselves above the vale, and reached the entrance of the woods, when Margarita stopped to look back upon the Gothic turrets of her father's castle, beyond which appeared a range of highlands, variegated with swelling lawns and copses. Here and there were seen a scattered hamlet or venerable monastery, shaded by beechen woods, or groves of Norway pine; and yet more remote, the mountains, over which she had passed in her way to Hartz Cassel, showed as a pale cloud suspended in the horizon.

“ This

“ This scene is beautiful, my Lady,” said Bertha ; “ yet in the course of our walk it may be in my power to shew you one superior.”

“ You shall conduct me thither,” said Margarita.

Bertha obeyed, and winding through the mazes of the wood, they at length attained the summit of a precipice, from which they looked down upon a deep and narrow valley.

Here Nature seemed to have lavished all her charms ; a stream, gushing from a moss-grown cavern, which it had worn in the side of the opposite hill, poured its limpid flood into the vale below, where it formed an extensive lake, whose green banks were enamelled by flowers of varied hue, or dressed with clumps of spiry poplar, or weeping willow : while in

the depths of the glen, amid dark groves of larch and cypress, was seen a solitary edifice, whose high walls were crowned with maffy rails of iron.

As Margarita fixed her eyes upon this object, “ ’Tis the convent of the holy order of Carmelite Nuns,” said Bertha, “ which my Lady has endowed, and in which it is said that she intends to immure herself at some future period. Alas !” she added, “ it is sad to think on the sufferings to which the rigour of the order condemns the unhappy sisterhood. Great Heaven !” she exclaimed, elevating her eyes, and crossing herself, “ is thy favour only to be obtained by the endurance of such cruel hardships ?”

“ I hope not,” replied Margarita, faintly smiling ; “ but, Bertha, I have
never

never before heard of this convent. Can the Baroness have formed any serious determination of becoming a recluse?"

"It was but a ruin," returned Bertha, "when my Lady caused it to be repaired; and since it has been completed, she at stated times has retired to it, and submitted, as it is imagined, to all the severe penances which are required of the holy sisters."

"Do I not see," said Margarita, endeavouring to assume an air of unconcern, "upon the summit of that hill several pillars of stone, the vestiges, no doubt, of some ancient edifice?"

"There," said Bertha, "according to a traditionary tale, was once a castle, to which Anastasia, the Princess of Pomerania, often retired to lament her cruel

separation from her Lord, the ill-fated Henry of Mecklenburgh. If my Lady will pardon me," she added, "I will relate the history of that Prince; it is a tale I always loved, and as we return to the castle, it may perhaps enliven a serious moment.

"Henry of Mecklenburgh," said Bertha, having the permission of her Lady, "was the eldest son of John, whose deeds of piety will ever be renowned in the annals of his country. At an early period of his life he attended his father in the wars against the Livonians, whose perpetual depredations continually harassed the territories of Mecklenburgh.

"It was on the eve of the last decisive battle with those barbarians, the young Prince had ascended an eminence to take a view of the enemy's encampments.

While

While he contemplated the plain below, unconscious of the danger which threatened himself and his little train, a large band of the Livonians rushed upon them from a deep thicket in which they had lain concealed.

“The Prince, overpowered by numbers, could only hope for safety in flight. He gave the word of command, and his train poured down the hill. The Prince’s courser had received a wound, by which his progress was so much impeded, that he was soon left by his companions. In their eagerness to escape the arrows of the enemy, the danger of the Prince was observed only by a private soldier, who, regardless of his own safety, rode back to his commander, and entreated him to take his horse.—

“ No,” replied the Prince, “ if I die, it will be in the cause of my country, and my lot will be enviable ; but ignominious will be that life which is preserved at the expence of a valiant servant.”—

“ It pleased Heaven, however, that the Prince should be preserved ; and when, after the victory of the following day, he fought the soldier, with an intention to reward him, he was not to be found, and Henry lamented him as destroyed in the field of battle.

“ It was some time after this event that the Prince having, by his father’s death, succeeded to the throne of Mecklenburgh, left his country to rescue the holy city from the hands of infidels. In this undertaking he proved unsuccessful ; he was taken prisoner, and carried to Cairo, where

where he remained in severe confinement six-and-twenty years, while for his subsistence he was indebted to the labours of a faithful servant.

“ During his captivity the reigning Soldan died, and another of mean extraction, although distinguished as a warrior, ascended the throne. Henry had in vain endeavoured to excite the pity of the former Soldan ; he now demanded, and at length obtained, an interview with his successor.

“ As he entered the imperial chamber, he thought of his children and the fair Anastasia ; he folded his arms, and prostrated himself at the feet of the Monarch, whose will was to be the rule of his fate.

“ Scarce

“ Scarce had he spoken—before he had commenced his melancholy recital—the Soldan descended from his throne, and raising the unfortunate Prince from the ground—“ Oh my Lord !” he exclaimed, “ for by that great title I was early taught to address your father, what fatal event has reduced you to this state ? While merit such as your’s is depressed, shall I exult in my elevation ?”—

“ The Lord of Mecklenburgh raised his eyes, and instantly recognized the German before the Livonian camp.

“ But,” added Bertha, “ did I not hear the castle clock ? I will not repeat at length the remainder of this tale. It is sufficient to say that the Soldan was so impressed with the memory of the disinterested bravery of the Prince, that he instantly granted him his liberty.”

As

As she ceased to speak, the porter opened the castle-gate, and Margarita instantly sought the apartment of the Baronefs, where she remained until the day was far advanced.

CHAP VII.

AT the hour of evening prayer the Baroness embraced her daughter with unusual kindness. "Go, my child," she said; "leave me to my devotions, and may Heaven bless you!"

Margarita obeyed; and as she hastened into the gallery, her heart beat with pity and affection for her ill-fated parent. At the door of her own chamber she met Bertha, who springing forwards, and seizing her Lady's robe, "If I have acted amiss," she exclaimed, "may I hope for a pardon?"

A deep

A deep colour suffused her cheek when Margarita asked an explanation.

“ Oh my Lady !” returned Bertha, “ if he is capable of deceit, in whom shall we confide ? He spoke of you with so much affection, his aspect was so noble, he smiled so sweetly, he entreated me with so much earnestness to plead for him ——”

“ Of whom do you speak ?” said Margarita, hastily.

“ A cavalier,” replied Bertha, with some hesitation, “ whom I saw at my father’s cottage. He has been some days in the village waiting an opportunity to see you.”

“ Is it possible !” exclaimed Margarita, can it indeed be ——”

“ You tremble, you look pale, my Lady,” said Bertha ; “ shall I return to the cavalier ? shall I tell him that you
will

will not receive his letter—that you will not permit him to see you?”

“No,” replied Margarita, endeavouring to assume an air of more composure; “you have acted with imprudence, Bertha, but if you have brought a letter, I cannot now return it.”

As she received a billet written in the well-known hand of Albert, she dismissed Bertha, and hastened to her own chamber, where she sunk upon a chair overpowered with various conflicting emotions.

“Oh Albert, Albert!” she exclaimed, “must I refuse to see you, or betray the confidence of my father?—dreadful alternative.” She sighed, and fixed her eyes upon the unopened billet; she remained for some moments lost in perplexing thought, and at length, as if animated by a sudden resolution, unclosed the
letter,

letter, and elevating her eyes, "Holy Heaven!" she said, "I see the difficult path which thou hast traced for me; I will obey the dictates of virtue, and resign to thee the direction of my fate."

Having uttered these words, she endeavoured to compose her mind, and to deliberate on the means by which she might soften the disappointment of Albert, whose ardent affection and solicitude for her happiness were manifest in every sentence of his letter.

With what fervour did he describe the misery of absence, and the anguish of disappointment, and how lightly did he touch upon the various fatigues and difficulties which he had endured in his attempts to discover the remote and sequestered place of her confinement! "Oh Margarita!" he continued, "if
Albert

Albert was ever dear to you, profit by the absence of the Baron Rhodolpho, and fly this place ; if you are not confined within the castle-walls, meet me to-night upon the platform. I have already prepared every thing for our flight ; and, if Heaven favours our undertaking, before the break of day we shall be many leagues distant from the domains of Rhodolpho."

" No, Albert !" exclaimed Margarita, in an agony of grief, " my father confides in me. If liberty, if my restoration to you can only be obtained by injuring him, I must renounce all hope for ever."—This resolution being once formed, she began, with a trembling hand, to answer his letter. She represented to him that the Baron Rhodolpho had treated her with paternal tenderness. " He has preserved me," she added, " from the oppressive
3 influence

influence of those mysterious persons, who would otherwise have exerted themselves to my destruction ; he has protected me, I have reason to think, at the hazard of his life ; he has frequently assured me, that my escape from the castle would be most fatal to himself, and yet he leaves me at full liberty. The gates of the castle are open to me, nor has he even exacted from me a promise. Shall I then betray my benefactor ? Will you, my beloved Albert, urge me to an act so base ? —No, we will be submissive to the will of Heaven ; we will support this trial with fortitude ; and whatever misfortunes may in future befall us, we shall never know that remorse, which would alone render them insupportable to us.

“ Go, my Albert, exert those high abilities, which you possess, to serve your country

country and your Monarch. Endeavour to merit the approbation of Heaven, and you may perhaps conciliate the favour of our persecutors !

“ Margarita must always love you ; she will daily pray for you ; the time may come when we may be re-united. The Baron Rhodolpho has many virtues ; we may perhaps hereafter find an active friend in him, but he is under some secret influence.”—

She used many more arguments to induce Albert to leave the domains of her father, and relinquish for the present a pursuit, of what she was persuaded was not attainable by honourable means. She at length closed her letter, and having delivered it to Bertha to carry to her beloved Albert, she threw herself upon a
chair

chair to bewail, without restraint, the painful sacrifice which duty required.

The faint hope of seeing Albert, perhaps for the last time, at length aroused her; she advanced to the oriel, and opened the casement; but what were her feelings, when looking towards the bridge, which was thrown over the torrent, she saw him leaning with a pensive air against the rugged trunk of an elm! She marked his graceful figure and animated mien. He had assumed the habit of a forester; his mantle of green cloth was fastened by a silver loop, and a plume of light feathers waved on his brow. As Bertha ascended the hill, he sprang forwards, and taking his cap from his head, he waved it in the air as a token of delight; his dark hair played in the wind; he gave his hand to Bertha, and leading her

her over the bridge, they were soon concealed by the intervening shrubs.

As Margarita contemplated this object, she found herself scarcely able to pursue the noble line of conduct which she had traced for herself. She became irresolute, and for a moment she doubted whether the happiness of her beloved Albert should be sacrificed to the interest of a father who disowned his child. The struggle was painful, but filial piety and an exalted sense of honour at length prevailed.

While she still remained at the window awaiting the return of Bertha, the landscape faded from her view, and she could only trace the dark and bold outlines of the forest.

Amid the silence of evening she thought she heard the sound of carriages and the clattering

clattering of hoofs. The sound soon became louder and more distinct, and the watchman upon the ramparts began to wind his brazen horn. The hollow blast was re-echoed from the encircling hills, while the sound of human voices was now plainly heard issuing from the depths of the vale.

“Holy Heaven!” exclaimed Margarita, as she endeavoured, through the obscurity of the evening, to descry the figure of Bertha, “my father returns, and his fiercest vengeance will await the unfortunate Albert. I might have found means to have convinced him of the extreme danger of his remaining within these domains, had the Baron postponed his journey one day only.”

She uttered these words, and, retiring

from the window, prepared herself to receive the Baron with composure.

The cavalcade approached; the domestics passed and repassed through the great gallery, the massive gates of the castle grated on their hinges, and the sound of trampling horses, in the paved courts, was succeeded by that of a hasty step upon the stairs.

“My Margarita! my child!” exclaimed the Baron Rhodolpho, springing forwards, and catching his daughter in his arms; “Heaven be praised! it has restored me to my child!”

Margarita burst into tears; and, in the moment of agitation, addressed the Baron by the title of father.

He reminded her of her error, but with unusual gentleness. “The sentiments of gratitude, with which you have
3 inspired

inspired me," he said, " have indeed led me to betray emotions of paternal affection ; yet do not flatter yourself, Margarita, that the former reasons for caution have ceased to exist. Alas ! my child, every hour renders my situation more critical—every hour renders me more wretched." He paused, and turned his head from his daughter to conceal his emotions.

Margarita took his hand, and while she pressed it to her lips, she entreated him to be consoled, and assured him that she would do every thing in her power to promote his happiness.

The Baron replied with incoherency and agitation ; at one moment he extolled the honour and generosity of his daughter, at another he deplored his wretched state, and execrated the tyrant who held

him in bondage ; then advancing towards the door with hasty steps, " Margarita," he said, " I have brought some friends with me to the castle—you will prepare to appear before them at supper : what you have already done for me," he added, " is more than I have merited ; but would you save me, you must make another sacrifice."

As he spoke, he closed the door after him, leaving his daughter in the most cruel state of fear and perplexity. She would willingly have excused herself from seeing her father's guests ; but she was alarmed by the wildness of his aspect, and feared to irritate him. She spent the time, previous to her appearance in the hall, in anxious expectation of Bertha, who was not as yet returned. She could not account for her delay, and her heart

was

was still disturbed for the fate of Albert, when she received a summons from her father.

In the gallery she was met by the Baron, who now received her with more tranquillity, and expressed great pleasure in her ready compliance with his wishes. "You know, Margarita," he said, "that the Baroneſs has long renounced all intercourse with the world, and that it would be extremely painful to her to appear on the occasion; but under my protection you will not refuse to ſee my friends. The Prince del Caſtel Nuovo," he added, in a hesitating tone, "is I think not unknown to you?"

"The Prince del Caſtel Nuovo!" she repeated with extreme agitation, while various apprehenſions for Albert ſuggeſted

themselves to her mind ; “ is it possible that you should have brought him hither ? ”

The Baron made no reply, but led her into the most magnificent apartment of the castle, where he presented her to his guests as the daughter of his brother, Ferdinand of Rhodolpho.

They bowed with an air of respect and admiration, and the courteous Castel Nuovo approaching her, seized her hand, and conducted her to the upper end of the room.

“ How sincerely do I rejoice, Madam,” he said, “ to see you restored to the dignities to which you were born ; but what would I say ? ” he added, suddenly interrupting himself ; “ the lovely Margarita wanted not the advantages of fortune

tune to distinguish her from the rest of her sex."

Margarita, who had paid little regard to what the Duke said, made no other answer than an inquiry after the health of the Princess.

"I have lately seen my sister," he replied, "at the castle of the Marquis Ulderic, where she will remain during the greater part of the approaching summer."

Margarita proceeded to ask after the Canon and her friends at Vienna; but the Prince was unable to give her any information concerning them.

The Baron, in the meantime, had assumed the appearance of gaiety; but the restraint which he laid upon himself was very evident to his daughter, who had been so long accustomed to indulge

gloomy presages, that her mind was disturbed by the fear of some impending evil, more insupportable than that of endless captivity. An air of the deepest sorrow was traced upon her beautiful features, and her thoughts were frequently abstracted from the present scene.

The Prince observed her melancholy; and as the Baron seldom interrupted their conversation, he was left at liberty to use every means to dispel it. Having related to her the political intelligence of the day, he passed, by an easy transition, to more remote events; and while his companions, animated by the exertions of the Baron, had yielded to loud and noisy merriment, he remained perfectly composed.

He condemned the cruelties which were now taking place in the newly discovered

discovered continent, and lamented the ignominious fate of the great Columbus, and the benevolent Bartholomew del las Casas.

While listening to the Prince, Margarita lost the sense of her own sorrows in the heavier afflictions of others ; and the charms, with which his discourse was replete, led her to forget that it was the Prince del Castel Nuovo by whom she was thus entertained.

When the banquet was prepared, the Duke conducted her into the hall, where, placing her at the head of the table, he seated himself beside her.

The conversation was now become more general ; and Margarita, being no longer interested by it, longed to accelerate the hour of retirement.

The supper being at length concluded, she arose; and the Prince having led her to the door, expressed his delight in the hopes that another day would renew the happiness he had enjoyed that evening.

CHAP.

CHAP. VII.

SCARCELY had the Prince returned to his friends, when Bertha appeared, and entreated her Lady to follow her to the cloisters which furrounded the inner court, where she informed her the cavalier waited to see her.

“ Oh Bertha !” exclaimed Margarita, “ you have undone me ! By what means did he gain admiffion ?”

“ By the affiftance of the porter,” replied the trembling Bertha.

"We shall suffer from this imprudence," returned Margarita.

"The porter will not betray us."

"And do you not know that the Baron is returned?"

"I could not resist the entreaties of the cavalier," replied Bertha; "and the cloisters are quite retired; no one enters them by night."

"'Tis enough," said Margarita, as she followed Bertha with hasty steps into the court of the chapel, whose deep shade seemed to offer them a shelter from all observation. A few lamps, suspended from the pillars which supported a circular gallery, afforded only a faint light to the paved walk beneath.

Scarce was Margarita's step heard in the court, before Albert rushed forward to meet her. "Oh my lovely, my

adored Margarita!" he exclaimed, "I could not hope that Heaven would so soon have accomplished my wishes. How great," he added, "was my difficulty to trace you to this sequestered spot!"

"But, alas!" he exclaimed, as he gazed upon her beautiful countenance, "you weep! Are you not well? You do not participate the joys which agitate my heart; you have forgotten our former attachment."

"Oh my beloved Albert!" she replied, "you are not conscious of the dangers which threaten you at this moment. If Margarita is dear to you, leave this place;" and, as she spoke, she raised her clasped hands to heaven.

"What should I fear?" he exclaimed, in an ecstasy of delight; "I will never again be separated from you!"

In

In the wind, that rocked the venerable towers, Margarita thought she heard the murmur of voices. Wild with grief and terror, she sunk upon her knees, and elevating her glistening eyes to Albert, "Do not court your own ruin!" she exclaimed; "do not seek to render me wretched! I know not how terrible may be the consequences of your remaining here."

"Be they what they will," said Albert, raising her up, and holding her to his heart, "I am resolved to hazard every danger to procure your liberty. Ah! do not weep," he added, gazing affectionately upon her, "let not our meeting be embittered by groundless alarms; this arm shall protect you from every ill."

"Tomorrow,"

“ To-morrow,” replied Margarita, “ I will meet you in the forest, in the hamlet, wherever you please.”

“ No,” exclaimed Albert, “ we will profit by the present hour. Have you forgotten the effects of delay at Rosendhall Castle? Lovely Margarita, will you always neglect the opportunities which Heaven offers you of regaining your freedom, of restoring your Albert to happiness? you must this moment consent to leave the castle. Wherefore those tears? wherefore that portentous silence? Speak, Margarita; if you do not love me sufficiently to incur a trifling inconvenience on my account, tell me so; I can bear every thing but this dreadful suspense.” And as he spoke, he pressed his hand to his heart, and heaved a deep sigh.

“ Oh!

“ Oh ! it is too much,” said Margarita ; “ this trial is too hard for me ! Would to Heaven that it was in my power to yield to your entreaties ! ”

“ And would you say it were not in your power ? ” he exclaimed. “ What should retain you here ? What duty do you owe to the Baron, your oppressor, your persecutor ? Our flight will not be discovered ; the porter alone is in our confidence, and your attendant assures me that he will not betray us.”

“ Yes, my Lady,” added Bertha, “ we may confide in Herman, and we have nothing else to fear. The Baroness retired to the monastery in the valley as soon as she was informed of the arrival of the Baron and his friends ; and your flight will probably not be observed till morning.”

“ Till

“ Till morning ! ” repeated Albert, “ we shall then be far from this place. Oh Margarita ! if you love me — I take no refusal,” he added, as he seized her arm, and would have drawn her forward, but she resisted his efforts and entreated him to hear her.

“ The moon has already reached the highest regions of the heavens,” he replied ; “ your idle timidity will be the ruin of my hopes.”

“ Albert,” said Margarita, motioning to Bertha to retire, “ I will reveal all to you ; I will convince you that I am bound by the most solemn obligations, and that your happiness is nearest my heart.”

“ Empty professions ! ” said the enraged youth. “ If, indeed, you would promote my happiness, you would consent
to

to leave this place ;” and as he spoke he seized her hand.

“ Oh ! do not compel me,” she frantically exclaimed, “ to break every bond of honour, duty, and gratitude !”

“ What would you say ?” exclaimed Albert, casting an angry glance upon her, and striking his hand upon his forehead ; “ I am wrought almost to madness by this uncertainty.”

A flood of light at that moment issued from a remote part of the cloisters, and the voice of the Prince was heard amid the arched roofs.

“ Oh Albert, Albert !” exclaimed Margarita, while a burning glow, which flushed her cheek, was instantly succeeded by a deadly paleness, “ we are undone ; in the sacred name of Heaven, begone !”

“ Is

“ Is it Castel Nuovo who detains you here ?” said Albert, in a voice rendered scarcely articulate by passion ; “ is this your boasted honour, your duty, your gratitude ; by that awful name which you so lately invoked, I will lay my haughty rival at my feet, or perish in the attempt !”

“ You have no rival, no competitor in my affection,” returned Margarita ; “ be more tranquil ; banish these ungenerous suspicions.”

“ Cease, vain flatterer,” exclaimed Albert, pushing her from him, and grasping his sword, while his eyes were fixed upon the Prince, who approached—“ Castel Nuovo,” he said, “ wherefore art thou here ?”

The spirits of the Duke were elated by the festivity of the company he had recently

recently quitted. The astonishment with which he first beheld Albert was soon changed into rage; he gazed upon him with a scornful smile, and drawing near to Margarita, "Allow me, Madam," he said, "to conduct you to the Baron, under whose more immediate protection you will no longer be subject to the importunities of that indigent youth."

"She shall not go," said Albert, rudely grasping her hand.

"What pretensions have you, Sir," asked the Prince, "to detain this lady?"

Albert replied in terms dictated by anger and contempt.

In vain did Margarita use every means to moderate the fury of the enraged disputants; her tears and entreaties were equally unavailing. Albert had drawn his sword, and called his noble adversary

to

to the contest. Margarita would have separated them, she would have held the avenging arm of the furious youth ; but he spurned her from him, and, regardless of her prayers, twice aimed an ill-directed blow at the Prince, whose sword, guided by a more experienced hand, soon inflicted a deep and deathlike wound in the side of the ill-fated Albert.

His head instantly became dizzy, he reeled back a few paces, his sword dropped from his hand, and, as he fell to the ground, Margarita received him in her arms ; and while she still clasped him to her heart, she sunk beside him on the stone pavement. For a moment she marked the warm blood fluctuating in his once blooming cheeks ; it gradually disappeared, and his features at length assumed the livid hue of death.

“ Heaven

“Heaven preserve him!” exclaimed Margarita, pressing his cold hand to her lips, while her fleeting senses seemed at once to forsake her.

The Prince had sheathed his sword; his cheeks were pale as those of his vanquished rival; he folded his arms, and, resting against the clustered pillars, contemplated in mute despair the horrid effects of his jealous rage.

In the meantime the Baron and his friends, alarmed by the shrieks of Bertha, were already collected in the cloisters.

As the Baron heard the name of Albert, and contemplated the bleeding youth, he became almost frantic with grief. His incoherent expressions seemed to relate to some remote and mysterious event, and he accused himself, rather than the Prince, as the perpetrator of this dreadful act.

He

He approached the almost lifeless body, and taking the cold hand within his, "The vital spark," he said, "may not yet be extinct; there may yet be some hope for this ill-fated youth." The Baron bent over him with every expression of sorrow; his blood-stained hair fell in a disorderly manner over his forehead; he elevated it, and gazed upon his beautiful countenance till the tear glistened in his eye; but suddenly recollecting himself, he commanded his servants to bear him from thence, to bind up his wounds, and to use every means which might restore him.

Albert was instantly raised, and carried from the cloisters; the Baron followed, and Bertha was alone left with her Lady and the Duke.

She sat down upon a stone step, and, raising the languid head of Margarita
upon

upon her lap, wept and deplored those heavy afflictions of which her imprudence had been the immediate cause.

The deep silence of the court was interrupted only by the distant murmur of voices, or at intervals by the groans of the unhappy Castel Nuovo, while, still leaning against the pillars, he directed his eyes towards the dark concave of Heaven. He would have implored forgiveness, but the half-formed prayer died away on his trembling lips. — “Honour,” he at length said in broken accents, “honour condemns the act.” He folded his arms, and again fixed his eyes upon Margarita.

Roused by his voice, the wretched daughter of Rhodolpho raised her head, and wildly gazed upon him: a confused recollection of the past rushed instantly upon her mind; she arose from the ground,

ground, and, supporting herself by the arm of Bertha, endeavoured, by quick and eager glances, to penetrate the shadowy recesses of the cloisters. By the pale gleam of the lamps, she observed the blood which stained the pavement, and the sword which Albert had dropped; she stooped, and grasped it in her hand.

“What would you do, my dear Lady?” said the terrified Bertha.

“Do you not know,” she replied, “that with this sword his noble heart was pierced?”

The Duke struck his clenched hand upon his breast, and, turning from the injured Margarita, traversed the cloisters with unequal steps.

“Did you not see him?” continued Margarita; “’tis but a moment, and I marked him as he lay upon the pavement!”

See—see—his blood—the blood of my beloved Albert, who is gone for ever ;— he was pale and cold.—Oh Heaven ! he was *dead*.”

“ Endeavour to compose yourself, my dear Lady,” said Bertha ; “ the worst may not have taken place, there may yet be hope.”

“ What do you say ?” interrupted the Prince in an agitated tone ; “ there can be none.”

Margarita gazed upon him for a moment, and, drawing her hand from Bertha, advanced towards him, and looking eagerly in his face, a faint smile animated his wan visage.

“ What would you say, lovely injured Margarita ?” said the Prince ; “ you cannot forgive me,—no—it would ask more than your angelic goodness to pardon a wretch—

wretch—who has so cruelly wronged you—” His voice faltered, and he concealed his face with his hand.

“ Did you too know Albert ?” continued Margarita, unconscious to whom she spoke. “ Ah ! if you loved him, you will deplore his lot with me ; for he was courteous and gentle, and yet his noble soul would sometimes fire with honourable indignation.—I would have saved him ;—did he accuse me of inconstancy ?—I will forgive him,—I will pray for the peace of his pure spirit,—he is no more,—the heavens are for ever obscured,—the sun is set never to rise again ;—this lovely world is become a wilderness.”

“ ’Tis too much,—’tis more than I can endure !” exclaimed the Duke.

“ Oh Margarita ! you have agitated my soul almost to madness ;—in the name

of all you hold most sacred," he added, falling on his knees before her, "grant me a pardon—say that you forgive me!"

"Forgive you!" she replied, "I know you not: for what should I forgive you?"

"Great Heaven!" said the Duke, "what means this frightful change?—and yet I dare not complain."

"Do you not know me, Margarita?" he added in a milder tone; "have you forgotten the unfortunate Castel Nuovo?"

She made no reply; he arose, and, kissing her hand with mingled emotions of horror and affection, led her to the door of her apartment, where having recommended her to the care of Bertha, he retired, impressed with the fear lest the consequences of his rage should be more
extensively

extensively fatal than he had at first imagined.

During the night Margarita was unable to sleep; she continued to converse with incoherency; and Bertha, who never left her, was unable to procure any information concerning Albert.

The Baron remained till break of day in his own chamber, into which he had ordered that the unfortunate youth should be carried, but admitted no other person to enter it but Everhard, the seneschal of the castle, and a confidential female servant.

Towards mid-day it was reported in the castle that the cavalier was no more; but Bertha, who was obliged to be constantly with her Lady, was unable to procure any circumstantial account of his death.

In the meantime the health of Margarita continued to decline ; a slow fever seemed constantly to prey upon her frame, and her mind had sunk into a state of insensibility in which she seemed to have lost all recollection of the past.

On the morning of the third day after this fatal event, while Margarita still continued in the same situation, and preparations were made in the castle for the private obsequies of the ill-fated Albert, Bertha was called into the presence of the Baron, who informed her that she must prepare within a few hours to attend her Lady, who would be that day removed from the castle.

She represented to her Lord that the health of her Lady was in so precarious a situation, that her life might be endangered by a removal.

The

The Baron lamented her illness, but added, that his commands must not be disputed.

Towards mid-day Margarita was carried into the courts of the castle. When the Baron lifted her into the carriage, and bade her farewell, he was evidently much affected ; but she was insensible to these testimonies of kindness. She reclined in the arms of her faithful attendant, and left the domains of her father without expressing a wish to know whither she should be conveyed.

Bertha, remembering the friends she had left, and the tragic event which had so recently taken place, continued to weep till her native hills receded from her view.

CHAP. VIII.

TWELVE hours were already spent since they had left Hartz Caffel, and it was totally dark when they began to ascend a winding track cut amid the rude acclivities of a mountain. Margarita had never expressed any wish to know the destination of her journey ; and Bertha, finding that they were left entirely with strangers, felt great apprehensions for the safety of her Lady, who had already suffered materially from fatigue.

The

The train soon reached a strong platform beneath the rugged walls of a majestic edifice, whose height and dimensions were concealed by the shades of night.

They at length stopped; and Margarita was taken from the carriage, and borne up a rocky flight of steps towards the castle-gates.

As the porter drew the massive bolts, Margarita, while supported by Bertha, raised her languid head, and gazed alternately at the castle seen by the light of the torches, and the gloomy mass of forest extending itself at her feet. She started as if some painful thought had recurred to her mind; she uttered several incoherent expressions, and sunk again into a state of insensibility.

The gates were at length thrown open, and she was conveyed through several extensive courts into a magnificent hall, where she was left with Bertha; who, while she supported her in her arms, and gazed with solicitude on her pale and dejected countenance, continued to lament the friends she had left, and the afflictions which her imprudence had produced.

A quarter of an hour had scarcely elapsed, when several female servants appeared. They seemed touched by the sufferings of the unfortunate lady, on whose beautiful features were depicted the sad effects of grief and fatigue.

They raised her in their arms, and carried her from the hall.

“Wherefore do you weep?” said Josephine, a lively girl, taking the hand of Bertha, “you have nothing here to
fear;

fear; and as to your Lady, be assured that a little repose will restore her health."

"I pray that it may be so," replied Bertha; "but will you allow me to ask to whom this castle belongs?"

Josephine smiled; "What!" she said, "do you not know that the Marquis Ulderic is lord of these domains?"

"The Marquis Ulderic," repeated Bertha, as they ascended the stairs, and traversed a long gallery; "yes, I have heard the peasants in the valley of Hartz speak of his splendour and magnificence; and yet the Baron Rhodolpho never mentions his name."

"Should your Lady recover," added Josephine, "you will have reason to rejoice that you have been brought hither. While the Marchioness remains at this castle, we enjoy a perpetual variety of

H 6 amusements ;

amusements; and although my Lord always appears serious, and even melancholy, yet he loves to promote these gaieties."

They had soon reached a spacious chamber in the western wing of the castle, where Bertha was left with her Lady, while the servants withdrew to procure some refreshments.

There was somewhat dark and gloomy in the appearance of this apartment, which suggested strange apprehensions to the mind of this simple girl; and although the lofty tester with its faded hangings of rich embroidery, the lamp dimly gleaming on the hearth, and the Gothic doors of carved wood, which shook with every blast, presented a scene much resembling those to which she had been accustomed at Hartz Cassel, yet these
objects

objects now seemed to affect her with fears from which she had hitherto been exempt.

Having suffered much from fatigue during the day, Bertha was compelled to leave her Lady to the care of strangers, while she took some repose. She returned to her again on the following morning, but perceived little improvement in her health.

The Marquis and Marchioness Ulderic frequently sent to ask after their unfortunate guest, and about mid-day the beautiful sister of Castel Nuovo came in person to make some inquiries concerning the welfare of Margarita.

The extreme paleness of her countenance, and the sympathy she expressed in the afflictions of Margarita, induced Bertha to suppose that the Princess entertained

tained the strongest affection for her Lady.

On the succeeding night, accompanied by Josephine, Bertha watched in the chamber of Margarita whilst her Lady slept. She questioned her companion concerning many things which had excited her curiosity since her arrival at the castle. She seemed particularly desirous of knowing into what chambers a door conducted, which was situated in the recess beside her Lady's bed. "I have endeavoured," she said, "to open it several times, but imagine that it is bolted within."

"I thought," replied Josephine, "that you would not be without fear on that head; and well you might be alarmed did you but know half that I do. I am a stranger in this country," she added, "and have heard but imperfect accounts of
what

what took place in the castle before I entered the service of the Marchioness; indeed this is a subject on which we are forbidden to speak, and therefore I have been enabled to discover little but from my own observations. From the monuments in the private chapel, I imagine that these domains formerly belonged to the family of Rhodolpho; there are many apartments, nay, almost the whole of the western wing of the castle, shut up on account of some strange and tremendous appearances which have there been witnessed; and I once heard it hinted, that it has never been inhabited since one of the Baron's family died there suddenly many years ago."

Josephine could give Bertha no farther information on this subject, and the

Marquis Ulderic and his family now afforded them a topic of conversation.

“ I have never loved my Lord,” said Josephine, “ since he banished from his castle Monsieur Albert, the son of Amelia Ghirlandajo, one of his former domestics, whom he had educated with the young Marquis. Much as we are attached to our young Lord, we were scarcely less so to his friend ; he was so cheerful, so courteous, and so little elated with his good fortune.

“ About two years ago, when my Lord came to reside at this castle, after an absence of some years, he seemed to become jealous of this amiable youth ; and whenever he was gayer than usual, he would check him with severity, and remind him of his ignoble birth.

“ The

“ The Marquis always ascribed every act of unkindness to this cavalier, to the influence of the Marchioness; but it was very evident that from his infancy she treated him with peculiar favour, and would frequently allow him to attend her when she walked in the neighbouring woods, and to sit beside her at the banquet. 'Tis true that she did not oppose his departure from the castle, which might be attributed to her thinking him an unfit companion for her son, as she was once heard to remind the young Princess del Castel Nuovo, when speaking in favourable terms of him, that a son of Amelia Ghirlandajo could have no pretensions to the friendship of a daughter of the house of Castel Nuovo.

“ But you weep, Bertha,” added Josephine; “ perhaps I weary you; endeavour

deavour to take a little sleep, and I will watch by your Lady."

Bertha perceived that the death of the ill-fated Albert was not universally known at the Castle of Ulderic, and she feared to relate an event on which she could not reflect without grief and remorse.

In the course of a few days a considerable amendment had taken place in the health of Margarita. She had recovered an indistinct recollection of past events; she called Bertha to the side of her bed, and thanked her for her many kind attentions. "You are now my only friend," she said; "the Baron Rhodolpho has denied me his protection, and yet I consulted his interest; I would willingly have avoided his displeasure. But whither have they brought me?" she added; "we are no longer at Hartz Cassel."

"We

"We are now at the castle of the Marquis Ulderic," replied Bertha, "which is situated amid the mountains which I have frequently descried from the windows of my father's cottage."

Margarita seemed for a moment to be lost in thought. "'Tis of no consequence," she at length said, "I cannot now hope for happiness, nor have I any thing to fear. I am become insensible to every misfortune. You perhaps imagine, Bertha, that I should lament his death; but I scorn an idle grief which can avail nothing. It was the will of Heaven that he should die; and the Holy Heaven be praised that I was permitted to be present! Ah! I well remember that hour," she added, "when we parted to meet no more! Oh that it could have been prolonged to the length of ages! that
I might

I might still clasp his cold hand, and gaze upon his pale countenance ! and yet it is of little importance—I shall soon follow my beloved Albert,—I shall descend into his tomb, and rest my head beside his.”

“ Peace, my Lady,” said Bertha ; “ you must compose yourself ;” and as she spoke, she drew her curtains, and retired.

On her return she found her Lady more tranquil ; all her conversation still, however, related to Albert, and she frequently asked if she might not visit his tomb.

“ Have you forgotten, my dear Lady,” said Bertha, “ that we are no longer at Hartz Cassel ?”

“ To whom,” asked Margarita, as if suddenly recollecting herself, “ does this castle belong ?”

“ To

“ To the Marquis Ulderic,” said Bertha.

Margarita repeated his name. “ Was it not the Marquis Ulderic,” she said, “ who was his guardian and benefactor? May I not arise, Bertha—may I not be permitted to see the protector of Albert?”

Bertha found it necessary to deny the request, and Margarita, being exhausted with her exertions, sunk into a profound and refreshing sleep, in which she continued for some hours.

CHAP IX.

FROM this sleep Margarita awoke very much refreshed. In the course of a few days her fever had entirely left her, and her strength was gradually restored; but her mind was still wholly occupied by the disastrous fate of her beloved Albert.

Her grief was such as refused every consolation; she believed that death alone could terminate her sufferings, and she was almost tempted to lament its tardy and lingering approach.

In

In the anti-chamber to her apartment was a balcony furrounded with high stone railing, and over-hanging the rocks on which the castle was erected, from whence was seen the plain where stood the little village of Gortze, situated on the green banks of a small lake formed by the mountain torrent : the ridge of uplands, which bounded the horizon, was blackened by groves of Norway pine.

The giddy height of this situation was broken by a rude mass of rock bulging out beneath the balcony at the distance of about an hundred feet, and dressed with all the sweet variety of numerous fragrant flowers.

When Margarita was sufficiently recovered, Bertha led her to this place, flattering herself that she would be pleased by the beauty of the prospect.

But

But no sooner did Margarita enter the balcony, and look down upon the valley, than she started back, and uttered a shriek of terror.

“ I was not mistaken,” she exclaimed, “ it is indeed the same place—’twas here that I beheld that dreadful object.”

“ What dreadful object ?” said Bertha with emotion.

Margarita made no reply. She had at that moment fixed her eyes on the distant hills, amid which she supposed the castle of the Baron to be situated ; her thoughts had already wandered from the present scene, and were now wholly occupied by the fate of Albert.

While she remained in the balcony, she inquired, for the first time since her arrival at the castle, after the young Marquis and the venerable Ernulphus Gesner.

“ The

“ The young Marquis,” replied Bertha, “ has long been in Italy, but he is expected to return in a few days.”

On the same evening the Marquis and Marchioness Ulderic desired to be admitted to Margarita’s apartment.

The majestic figure of the Marchioness, her dark and animated eyes acquiring new lustre from the borrowed bloom which flushed her cheeks, for a moment attracted the attention of her unhappy guest.

But when the Marquis appeared, the horror of Margarita was such as she found it impossible to conceal : a sudden glow suffused her cheek, which was instantly succeeded by a death-like paleness ; her limbs trembled, and she sunk almost motionless upon a chair.

In the protector of Albert, and the father of the amiable Henry, she recognized

her dreaded pursuer, and hitherto unknown persecutor.

The Marchioness was alarmed at this sudden indisposition, which she attributed to the weak state of Margarita's spirits; but the Marquis, who was better acquainted with it's real cause, betrayed no emotions either of surprise or anger. His features remained unaltered by passion, and his reserved and haughty deportment suffered no visible change.

After having yielded to the first transports of grief, and remembering that the happiness of Albert was no longer involved with her's, Margarita became more tranquil, and was soon sufficiently recovered to make some slight apology for the reception which she had given the Marchioness.

Her

Her illustrious visitants remained but a short time with her, and seldom repeated their visit.

Many days had already elapsed since Margarita left Hartz Cassel, when one evening, whilst alone in her apartment, she was surprised by a gentle knocking at her door. Upon opening it, she beheld the young Marquis, who accosted her with an affectionate, yet melancholy air.

Margarita silently gave him her hand, and led him into the balcony.

For some moments Henry was too deeply affected to be able to speak; he took her hand within his, and contemplated with kind solicitude her pale and dejected countenance.

“ Lady Margarita,” he at length said, “ I fear that your sufferings have been great ; but Heaven, who has decreed you

these afflictions, will soon terminate your sorrows, and many serene and happy hours, I trust, will yet be allotted you."

"No," replied Margarita, "that cannot be. I have received an awful lesson, I have learned that those who expect happiness in this state of being, build their hopes upon an aerial foundation. I pray that I may be resigned to my fate, that I may be submissive to the decrees of Heaven; but I never can a second time be deceived by these delusive views: if a long life is allowed me, it will be but a prolongation of my sufferings; if I should be soon called into eternity, I shall have little to regret, and every thing to hope."

"And do you not think," returned the young Marquis, after a momentary pause, "that these sentiments may
perhaps

perhaps originate from having once placed too high a value on the perishable possessions of this world?

“What is the great end for which life is given us? Is it that we may acquire renown? that we may become the votaries of pleasure, or enjoy the society of our fellow-creatures? Is this short, this transitory existence fitted for any of these purposes?

“How uncertain must be that enjoyment which is derived from pleasures which cloy even in the gayest hours! nor do we rest our hopes upon a firmer foundation, when we repose them on a being liable to suffer innumerable changes and mischances. Were those who entered life at the same time allotted a fixed period of existence, and decreed to descend together into the tomb, we might more

reasonably rely on friendships cultivated in youth, to become the solace of our declining years; but Heaven, in subjecting all ages alike to the shaft of death, has exposed the fallacy of these views, and directed our attention to a nobler pursuit. We should aspire to be the blessed instruments, under the direction of Providence, of promoting the general good of our fellow-creatures, and, by these glorious occupations, to improve and prepare our minds for the enjoyments which are promised us in a future state. If in the meantime our task is rendered easier by the kind offices of friendship, if we are allowed a companion of our labours, let us be thankful for a blessing which we have not merited.

“ Our days are in the hand of Heaven,” continued the young Marquis,
while

while his style was elevated by the importance of the subject ; “ the sun that rolls it’s majestic course above our heads, the thousand orbs which submit to their great ruler, mark in their regular progress the silent lapse of time, and seem to be a constant warning to us that our hours are numbered. In this short space we have much to do ; and shall we waste those precious hours in unavailing grief ?

“ I loved Albert,” he continued, “ with the affection of a brother ; he was the earliest, and almost the only companion of my childhood. I still possess some friends, and time may yet raise others to me, but none can ever be so dear to me as he was. With whom can I review the scenes of infantine delight, or on whom can I repose with so much confidence the inmost sentiments of my heart ?

I have indeed suffered a heavy affliction ; yet I could not be justified if I allowed my grief to render me less attentive to my friends, or negligent of those duties which we owe to ourselves and to Heaven."

Henry paused, but Margarita made no reply. " If I have been too harsh," he added, as he raised his eyes to her pale, yet composed countenance, " attribute my severity, Lady Margarita, to want of judgment, rather than to any degree of insensibility."

" *Insensibility !*" she repeated ; " no, my Lord, I cannot be so mistaken in your character as to entertain a suspicion so unworthy of you."

The young Marquis smiled, and, endeavouring to conceal the uneasiness of his mind, introduced more indifferent subjects.

subjects. Margarita seemed to be sensible of his kindness; but he was convinced that a length of time might elapse before she would recover her tranquillity.

On the following evening, when the young Marquis repeated his visit, Margarita received him with a degree of pleasure which had been long unknown to her. She asked him after Ernulphus Gefner, and inquired, with much solicitude, if he had seen Canon Bernardo and his sister since that eventful evening in which she had left the Canonry.

To this question Henry made no other reply than that his tutor was not as yet returned; and Margarita, whose mind was frequently confused, did not repeat her inquiries concerning her adopted father till after a considerable length of time.

The young Marquis again evaded the question, by informing her that he had been delayed in Italy till his presence was requisite in his father's territories, and that he had not been able to see the family at the Canonry on his return through Vienna.

During many successive days the young Marquis continued his evening visits to Margarita, who was entirely neglected by the Marchioness. From his society and unremitting attentions she derived her only consolation, and her heart beat with affection and gratitude to the amiable friend of the lamented Albert, who had neglected every pursuit and every pleasure to console her in the hour of affliction.

Various were the means by which Henry endeavoured to promote the happiness

pinefs of Margarita, and to remove that deep fenfe of forrow with which ſhe was oppreſſed. He would ſometimes converſe with her on the moſt ſerious and intereſting ſubjects, or deſcribe to her thoſe beautiful ſcenes which he had recently viſited in Italy. The vale of Arno, the lofty domes of Rome, and the wild beauties of the quarries of Tufcany were preſented in lively colours to her imagination.

One evening, when Margarita waited the arrival of the young Marquis, ſhe was ſurpriſed by the voice of his father in the anti-chamber.

The countenance of the Marquis, as he entered her apartment, was expreſſive of pride and ſeverity.

In the courſe of their converſation, he took occaſion to inform her that the Prince del Caſtel Nuovo was expected in

a few days at the castle, and expressed a wish that she would permit him to see her, and would endeavour to forget the share he had taken in a late unfortunate transaction.

“ And can you forget it, my Lord ?” replied Margarita ; “ have you forgotten that the injured Albert was educated as your own son, and raised by you from that humble station in which he might still have lived in security and happiness ?”

“ Margarita,” returned the Marquis with an assumed gentleness, “ in consideration of what you have suffered, I pardon your impetuosity. Albert was an engaging youth—he possessed many virtues ; but while we honour the sacred memory of the departed, justice is due to the living. Albert had given repeated
provocations

provocations to his illustrious adversary, of a nature which honour compelled him to resent. The Prince del Castel Nuovo," added the Marquis, "is my friend, and friendship obliges me to enter into an explanation, which will remove the reproach which this affair casts upon his character.

"The ill-fated youth, whose loss we deplore, would never have wanted a patron in me, or a friend in the Prince, had he not forfeited our favour by the most ungenerous conduct. Young as he was when he left the Castle of Ulderic, he had already formed the project of elevating himself to the highest dignities—he had aspired to the favour, and won the affections of the Princess del Castel Nuovo."

" 'Tis

" 'Tis impossible," exclaimed Margarita ; " Albert was incapable of an act so base."

" Do you dispute my veracity ?" replied the Marquis ; " for what motive should I attempt to deceive you ? Are you not entirely in my power, and do you suppose that I would use an artifice to induce you to obey my wishes ?" As he uttered these words he retired, leaving Margarita disturbed with the most painful doubts and apprehensions.

CHAP.

CHAP. X.

THIS conversation had so great an effect upon Margarita, that she experienced little rest during that night, and on the following day her mind was at times so confused and agitated, that she would repeat the name of Albert and the Prince, and wildly call upon death to terminate her sufferings.

The Marquis being informed of her situation, and fearing lest she should attempt an escape, commanded Adelais, a domestic faithful to his interest, to watch
in

in her apartment, and never to allow her to leave it without his express command. So jealously did she perform her office, that the young Marquis was obliged to discontinue his evening visits.

When deprived of her only comforter, Margarita yielded without restraint to her grief; and her mind, being constantly occupied by one painful train of thought, seemed to have lost all its reasoning powers, and was capable only of admitting gloomy images.

In the meantime the venerable Ernulphus arrived at the castle, and soon afterwards the Prince del Castel Nuovo, a guest less welcome to the young Marquis.

Margarita had frequently expressed a wish to leave her apartment, and asked Bertha if she might not be permitted to walk upon the ramparts of the castle.

This

This request, which had been frequently denied by the vigilant Adelaïs, was at length granted to the intercessions of Bertha.

The evening was serene, and the air refreshing, when Margarita, conducted by her faithful attendant, ascended a winding flight of steps which led to the northern side of the ramparts.

The change of scene seemed for a moment to please her; but as she looked down from the heights, her head became giddy, and covering her eyes with her hand, "My sight," she exclaimed, "is oppressed with this confusion of objects; remove me, Bertha, I entreat you, from this place—I should be at rest in my own apartments."

"And

“ And has my Lady so soon forgotten,” replied Bertha, “ how earnestly she wished to leave her chamber ?”

“ I had vainly thought,” said Margarita, raising her languid head, “ to have found relief in a change of scene ; but, alas ! I was mistaken,” she added, pressing her hand to her heart, “ ’tis here that I am oppressed !”

Bertha, still hoping to sooth her grief, led her slowly towards the southern side of the castle, where she pointed out those objects most calculated to please her—the yellow beams of the sun stealing through the broken clouds, the cattle feeding on the green hill, and the shadows that glided in quick succession over the extensive range of woodlands beneath the castle walls.

Margarita

Margarita gazed upon them with indifference, and hastily turned towards the stairs, by which she had ascended the ramparts.

At that instant Ernulphus Gesner appeared leaning upon the arm of Henry.

Margarita shrunk back as she beheld them, and grasping the hand of Bertha, "Oh conceal me! conceal me," she exclaimed; "I am become unfit for society, a reproach to those beloved friends who endeavoured to arm my mind with fortitude. I am not what I once was," she added; "a dark film is drawn over my eyes—every object wears a gloomy and portentous aspect."

As Ernulphus and the young Marquis drew near, they paused to gaze upon the wild and mournful figure of Margarita. The countenance of Henry was expressive
of

of deep and manly grief, while the tear trickled down the cheek of his venerable tutor, whom age had deprived of his former strength and firmness.

Henry was the first who broke the awful silence. "Have you forgotten me, Lady Margarita," he said, "or has the harsh treatment you have received in the castle of Ulderich for ever deprived the unfortunate Henry of your esteem?"

"No," she replied, "the treatment I have received is what I have merited. Was I not the occasion of Albert's death? I have deprived you of your friend, and will you still continue to interest yourself in my welfare?—There," she added, "where the tufts of pines fringe the northern horizon, he lies entombed—his head rests upon a marble pillow—his eyes are for ever closed———I saw him
extended

extended at my feet—the purple blood streamed from his heart while I looked upon him, and the life's bloom faded for ever from his cheek!—But, my Lord, your eyes are filled with tears,” she continued, while her voice was mellowed into its softest cadence; “do you lament that Albert is at peace, or do you regret that you are condemned to linger out a long and weary existence in these melancholy regions?”

The young Marquis represented to her the impropriety of this language, and used many arguments to convince her that life was a gift from Heaven which it was impious to despise.—But she was not at that time capable of reasoning, and all her answers were dictated by despair.

During

During this conversation Ernulphus Gesner had been employed in considering by what means he might most effectually restore the composure of her mind, and awaken her to those principles of piety and resignation which had formerly directed her actions.

This venerable man had long studied human nature, and was convinced that when one painful train of thoughts had long absorbed each faculty of the mind, the dangerous tendency could only be obviated by exciting new and equally forcible ideas. When grief divides it's objects, it frequently loses it's most pernicious consequences.

A means, by which to effect this purpose, but too readily presented itself. He had lately been present at the death of Canon Bernardo, the friend of his youth ;

he

he knew that Margarita was ignorant of this event. She had left him but a few months past in the vigour of health, and forming plans for the happiness of his adopted children.

“Canon Bernardo,” said Ernulphus, addressing himself to the young Marquis, and seemingly inattentive to Margarita, “was the most amiable of men. I was the friend of his childhood, and accompanied him from his father’s house, in the valley of Ermengarda, to the collegiate school of St. Peter’s at Rome.

“There the genius of Bernardo,” he continued, “could not be long concealed—it attracted universal admiration; and among the many friends, which his abilities and virtues had acquired him, was the Cardinal Presbyter of St. Peter ad Vincula, the celebrated Julian della

Rovere, afterwards Julius the Second. Had Bernardo encouraged his patron in his ambitious projects, and flattered his favourite pursuits, he might have attained the highest professional honours. During the first years of this pontificate, the Canon remained in the Court of St. Peter; but at length, being disgusted by the intractable and restless spirit of that Pontiff, who ought to have been an example of moderation and humility to the christian world, he bade adieu to Courts for several years, and retired to the delightful regions of Val de Fiores, on the shores of the Adriatic. In this pleasing retirement he presided over the education of the young Marquis Bellone, the only son of his widowed mother. These, as I have often heard my friend say, were some of the happiest days of his life. The Marchioness
was

was a character of which modern times can scarcely afford an example; the sorrows, which she had endured, had indeed blended a degree of romantic melancholy with all her actions. But the young Marquis was a pupil truly worthy of such a tutor. To every virtuous disposition, which he possessed in the highest degree, he added that sweet ingenuoufness which is the most engaging ornament of youth; and such was the affection which the Canon bore to the memory of this family, that he never could be persuaded in after life to visit the Palace of Val de Fiores. It pleased Heaven to take this only remaining hope of the house of Bel-lone from this world; and my friend Bernardo, having paid the last duties to the mother of his beloved pupil, returned to Rome. There, without attempting

to gain the patronage of the great, he became as much the favourite of Leo, as he had been of his predecessor Julius.

“ Cardinal Sanseverino would frequently say, “ We should all have reason to envy, and even to fear Bernardo, did he but possess that degree of worldly prudence, which would enable him to profit by the ascendancy, his engaging manners and exalted genius have given him over the minds of all orders of men.”—

“ One of the most striking features in the character of the Canon,” continued Ernulphus, perceiving that Margarita’s attention was deeply interested, “ was his blindness to the defects of those who surrounded him in the Court of the profligate Leo. He might be compared to one of those singular insects which sucks its nectared food from the most poisonous weed.

weed. While encircled by vice, he always retained his simplicity of manners. His natural openness was derived from a consciousness that he had nothing to conceal, and his gaiety was the effect of an universal benevolence. He loved to train the steps of youth in those paths of virtue which he himself had trod; he was a parent to the orphan, and a protector of the helpless!"

Margarita heaved a sigh, and the tear glistened in the eye of the young Marquis.

"Never was his aspiring genius," continued Ernulphus, "depressed for any length of time by the various mischances attendant on mortality. Hope seemed to rise spontaneously in his breast, and, when bending beneath the weight of time, he still imagined before him a long series of years, and scenes of happiness on
K 2 earth,

earth, which at some future time might be realized. While the favourite of the ambitious Julius, he was more acquainted with what had passed in the Court of Constantine, or in the household of the British Alfred, than with the political affairs of the Pontificate.

“ Often have I heard the Roman ladies say, “ The young Bernardo is better versed in the manners of the Imperial Court of Helena, and the courtesies due to the Lady Theodosia, than in the ceremonies of the present day.”—

“ His eminent genius wasted him into ages not his own, and taught him to live in scenes long forgotten ; and must the world be deprived of such an ornament ? Would not his purity of manners ensure him a longer life ?” added Ernulphus ;
“ Must I live to see that glowing genius
for

for ever extinguished? to witness the vanity of his innocent and benevolent hopes?"—Here he paused: a faint colour dyed the pale cheek of Margarita; she sighed again, and seemed anxiously to await his continuation.—“Canon Bernardo,” said Ernulphus, “attended his patron Leo in a lingering illness at his villa Magliano; from thence, after his death, he returned to his native place, after an absence of twenty years. But it is impossible to trace him through the whole of a life, in which, actuated by the strongest motives of benevolence, his virtues were numerous, and his few errors calculated to injure him more in the eyes of worldly-minded men, than in those of Heaven.

“But, Oh my Henry!” added Ernulphus, with a faltering and tremulous voice,

voice, " let us investigate the conduct of Bernardo in the more private scenes of life ;—there he was indeed amiable ; he could see charms in his friends which a less partial observer could never discern ; he would attribute virtuous motives to their most doubtful actions ; and where others would perceive occasion for praise, he would find reason for rapturous delight. How did he exult in the happiness of youth ! With what gaiety would he partake of their amusements ! he had not lost that innocence which gives a zest to all our juvenile sports. His anger was but a faint shade, which, passing over a beautiful landscape, is soon gone, and leaves not a trace behind."

The long-restrained tear already trembled in the eye of Margarita.

" His

“ His attachments, his friendships,” proceeded Ernulphus, still apparently regardless of her, “ were such as no length of time could efface: through every change of life Canon Bernardo was always the same—the comforter of the unfortunate, and the animated companion of the prosperous.

“ But two years are elapsed,” said Ernulphus, after a moment’s hesitation, “ since I visited him at the Canonry, after a very long and painful separation. Time had indeed impressed his features with the marks of age, but the fire of youth, and the animation of genius still flashed in his eyes. It was then that we visited our native place. While wandering together amid scenes which reminded us of the days of our early youth, he painted in the most lively colours his present happi-

ness, and spoke with raptures of the kindness of his excellent sister, and the improving virtues of his adopted daughter."

Margarita, at that moment, turned aside to conceal the tears which now flowed abundantly down her cheeks.

"He described with delight," proceeded Ernulphus, "the engaging dispositions of his child; he represented all her infantine endearments, and endeavoured, but even his glowing diction seemed inadequate, to express the deep affection he entertained for her.

"Little did he think," continued the venerable Gesner after some intermission, "that the time was so near at hand when he must be deprived of the society of his beloved Margarita, when he must relinquish this life, and return to his Creator, unfulfilled as the new-born infant."

As

As Margarita listened to these last words, she raised her eyes to heaven, and sunk, totally softened and overcome with grief, in the arms of Bertha.

Ernulphus was silent, and, while he gazed with affectionate solicitude on Margarita, addressed a secret prayer to Heaven for the restoration of her peace of mind.

CHAP. XI.

MARGARITA continued to weep for a considerable length of time ; her grief was, however, no longer violent and alarming—it was such as affection would inspire, and religion approve. She sometimes indeed interrupted her tears to ask if her father, for such she had always considered the good Bernardo, had suffered much during his illness, if he had expressed a wish to see his Margarita, or how his excellent sister had supported the accumulation

mulation of sorrows with which she had been oppressed.

“Heaven,” replied Ernulphus, “tempers it’s chastisements to those who are patient and resigned. The virtuous Christina, when deprived of the child whom she had nurtured with maternal tenderness, preserved an appearance of cheerfulness which gladdened the last hours of her beloved brother; and that confidence in Heaven, which enabled her to perform this act of heroic virtue, will assist her beneath the heaviest trials.”

Margarita received the lesson, which was conveyed in this reply of Ernulphus, with her former humility; she heaved a deep sigh, and being warned by Bertha that the hour was come in which she had promised to return to her apartment, she entreated her venerable friend to meet

her again on the ramparts on the following evening.

To this request Ernulphus instantly complied ; and, having given her his blessing, she was led by Bertha to her chamber.

During that night the image of the revered Bernardo was constantly present to her ; she remembered his innumerable acts of beneficence towards her, and reviewed the many happy days she had spent beneath his paternal protection. With the sorrow for the loss she had sustained in him, was blended the painful consciousness of her late want of resignation to the will of Heaven.

In imitation of the excellent Christina, she endeavoured to overcome these emotions of grief ; she attempted to check the starting tear, and to direct her thoughts

thoughts to other objects, but her efforts were fruitless ; Canon Bernardo and Albert were too dear to her ever to be forgotten. Time indeed might soften her grief, but while life was spared her, she never could cease to regret their loss.

On the following evening, she met Ernulphus and the young Marquis on the ramparts of the castle. When she accosted them, the tear indeed glistened in her eye, and trickled down her pale cheek ; but they rejoiced to see that her countenance was no longer expressive of those violent passions which had recently threatened a deprivation of her reason. They now received her with every token of tenderness and affection, and used every means, which pity could suggest, to sooth and console her.

The

The account which Ernulphus gave of the circumstances attendant on his friend's decease, was such as, upon the whole, afforded comfort to her.

“ Towards the close of the last year,” he said, “ I accompanied my young Lord into Italy, from whence I was hastily recalled by a summons from Christina, who informed me that her brother wished to see me. From such a request, at a time when I was at so great a distance from Vienna, I feared the worst ; and all my fears were confirmed when I entered the library of the Canonry.

“ I beheld my old friend reclining in his arm chair, and conversing with his sister. He arose, and advanced to meet me ; his step was feeble, yet his pale and altered countenance brightened with its usual smiles.

“ My

“ My Ernulphus,” he said, “ I had scarcely hoped this happiness ;” and as he placed me beside him, “ few people,” he added with his former gaiety, “ can at my time of life boast of two such friends as are now before me.”—

“ My presence seemed to raise his spirits for a time ; but he soon became dejected, and often spoke of his lost child.

“ About that time we fortunately received a letter from Leipzig, informing us of all that had taken place at Rosendhall Castle. Christina concealed from the Canon every disagreeable circumstance which it related, and imparted to him only those few which might afford him some consolation.

“ The active imagination of Bernardo magnified each ray of hope ; and while he imagined, from the apparent cheerfulness
of

of his sister, that she participated his sanguine expectations, he persuaded himself that his adopted children would soon be restored to him, and that he should one day see them again at Ermengarda. With what innocent delight would he expatiate on that fancied hour, and dwell upon the beauties of his native place, improving beneath his hand !

“ But, alas ! this innocent gaiety at length subsided, and he sunk into a state of insensibility, in which death stole upon him like sleep upon the weary child ; and after death, his former placid smile still rested on his pallid features.

“ The habit of piety, which he had retained even in the gayest hours of life, rendered every painful preparation for this awful change unnecessary. His animated eyes and smiling countenance, even
when

when he was bereft of the power of speech, afforded the highest consolation to the friends who watched beside his couch; and, at the moment when our hearts were most deeply oppressed with sorrow for his loss, we were inclined to wish that our deaths might resemble his." — Ernulphus paused, and was for some moments unable to proceed.

"In Canon Bernardo," he at length said, "the aged lost a friend, the young a parent, and this period one of its brightest ornaments.

"But it is enough," he added, suddenly interrupting himself; "at some future period I will renew this conversation. We are united, Margarita, by the same afflictions; and if your portion of sorrow is aggravated by other painful circumstances, trust in the goodness of Providence; and,

and, while you steadily pursue the paths of virtue, you will have nothing to fear. Heaven will rescue you from the hands of your oppressors. You have friends," he added, as he fixed his eyes on the young Marquis, "who are deeply interested in your welfare, and will not allow you to be exposed to any real indignities."

Several voices being heard at that moment proceeding from an adjacent part of the ramparts, they were compelled to break off their conversation; and Margarita, having expressed her gratitude to Ernulphus and the amiable Henry, returned to her own apartment.

"Alas!" said Bertha as soon as she was alone with her Lady, "how was I deceived when I believed that this was a happy world! when I flattered myself that

that all was joy and gladness without the domains of the Baron Rhodolpho !”

“ I am sorry, Bertha, ” replied Margarita, “ that you can no longer entertain this pleasing illusion. This state of being is very far from a happy one ; and yet, ” she added, “ we have no reason to repine—we have many intervals of ease, and some of enjoyment ; and shall we shrink from those sufferings, which, properly endured, will be rewarded by immortal joys ? ”—As she uttered these words, she advanced to the balcony, and reclining her weary limbs upon a sofa, continued for a length of time absorbed in thought.

The shades of evening approached ; Margarita still continued silent, and Bertha, who watched by her Lady, was occupied by the most gloomy reflections.

The

The festive sound of music was at length heard issuing from a distant hall. Bertha seemed to be animated by the voice of joy, and, yielding to the solicitations of her indulgent Lady, soon quitted her to partake of the amusement.

When left alone, Margarita employed the melancholy hours in painful retrospect. The sound of merriment was wafted to her at intervals by the evening breeze; and again the grey fly, winding its drowsy horn, alone disturbed the deep silence.

A considerable length of time was already elapsed, and Bertha did not return. While pursuing the gay throng from one scene of pleasure to another, she had forgotten her Lady, and those heavy afflictions to which she had been recently witness.

It

It was nearly midnight when Margarita was surprised at the voice of Adelaïs in her apartment, who informed her that the Marquis wished to see her.

“What, to night?” replied Margarita in a tremulous tone.

“Yes, Madam,” returned Adelaïs; “my Lord will not admit any excuse.”

“Nor do I wish to be excused,” said Margarita, arising from the sofa; “I care not how soon my fate is decided.”

As Adelaïs led her into the gallery, a loud clamour of voices rushed upon her ear.

Margarita turned in silent anguish from the discordant sound, and entreated Adelaïs to conduct her by a private passage to the Marquis.

She

She obeyed, and led her through several retired chambers to a flight of stone steps which descended into the great hall.

The voice of laughter again reached her ear as she entered the hall, which was itself gloomy and deserted, while through a long vista, formed by the clustered pillars, a blaze of light issued from the inner apartments, and the airy figures of gaiety were seen diminished in distance.

Margarita's attention was drawn from these objects by Adelais, who reminded her that every delay was unpleasing to her Lord. She heaved a sigh ; but not wishing to defer the dreaded interview, immediately advanced to a door in a remote part of the hall, which her unrelenting conductress had already thrown open.

CHAP.

CHAP. XII.

BUT very different was the reception which Margarita met with, to what she had had reason to expect. Instead of the severe and haughty Ulderico, the elegant sister of the Prince del Castel Nuovo alone waited her arrival.

The beautiful Claudia seemed entirely to have forgotten her former haughty reserve. She approached Margarita, and, throwing her arms round her neck, entreated her to banish every fear.—“ You have indeed suffered much, my beloved Margarita,”

Margarita," she said, "and I, who am no stranger to sorrow, have sympathized warmly with your afflictions."

"Is it from the Princess del Castel Nuovo," replied Margarita after a momentary pause, "that I must expect pity and consolation? Was I not summoned to appear in the presence of the Marquis Ulderic?"

"Lady Margarita," replied the Princess, gently pressing her hand within her's, "I knew the timidity of your nature, and the intemperate severity of the Marquis. I therefore interceded for you, and entreated him to spare you an interview, which I was convinced would be painful to you: I fear, however, that the task which I have undertaken will prove too hard for me, that I shall have reason to regret my unseasonable compassion

sion

sion ; and yet," she added, " the affection which I entertain for the best of brothers may perhaps stimulate me to exertions above myself, and teach me to forget the cruel wounds with which my heart is pierced."

So expressive was the tone of voice with which she uttered these words, that Margarita found herself deeply interested in her supposed afflictions.

" Is the Princess oppressed with sorrow," she said ; " and can she forget her own misfortunes, to administer consolation to another ?"

" 'Tis a generosity of which I scarcely thought myself capable, which actuates my conduct," replied Claudia ; " but since I have advanced so far, I will unveil to you the inmost recesses of my heart, and the various passions which rend my

bosom at this moment. You shall be convinced that the house of Castel Nuovo is not without honour. I will no longer conceal from you," added the Princess, "that the occasion of this interview was to intercede with you for my unfortunate brother.—Ah! you shudder even at the repetition of his name! he asks no more than to be allowed to see you, to receive from you that pardon which alone can restore him to tranquillity. He is a sincere penitent, his is no affected sorrow, and yet his crime was undesigned, and not unprovoked."

"May I entreat you, Madam," interrupted Margarita, "to urge me no farther? I cannot consent to see your brother. I grant him my pardon—I pray Heaven to have mercy upon him; but can I ever forget——"

"It

“ It is from the ill-fated Claudia,” replied the Princess, “ that Margarita must receive a lesson of generosity ;—the love I bear my noble brother urges me to an avowal of my sufferings, and yet I fear to inflict a wound on a heart already breaking.”—She hesitated, and turning her head aside, wiped away the tears which flowed down her cheeks.

Margarita, who already began to foresee what she would say, became pale as death, and remained silent.

The Princess seemed for some moments wholly absorbed in grief ; she clasped her hands, and pressing them to her heart, “ Oh Albert, Albert !” she exclaimed in an elevated tone, “ wherefore did you deceive me ? wherefore did you induce me to think that I was dear to you ? Your life was perhaps the victim of your falsehood.”

The countenance of Margarita instantly assumed an expression of indignation; "Albert was incapable of deceit," she replied.

"It is, indeed, cruel to find that one has been mistaken in the character of a friend who is no more," said Claudia, with firmness; "and yet wherefore should I wish to aggravate your afflictions by an invidious calumny? No, I would scorn so perfidious an act."

Margarita contemplated the Princess for some moments with earnestness, wishing, if possible, to discover the motives of her present conduct; but suddenly recollecting herself—"Pardon me, Madam," she said, "if I ask a farther proof before I condemn my beloved Albert. I do not call your veracity in question; but he was hasty and imprudent, and it is possible

possible that you might be mistaken in the proofs of his guilt."

The Princess sighed.—"I would not wound your heart too deeply," she replied ; "I would avoid the recapitulation of his errors ; although he treated me with cruel inconstancy, yet his memory will always be dear to me. Was it not Albert," she added, throwing up her tearful eyes, "who was the companion of my childish amusements, who decked the flaxen ringlets of my hair with flowery wreaths, and listened with ecstasy while I touched the soft chords of the harp !—But wherefore that wild and agitated air ?" said the Princess, suddenly interrupting herself ; "Margarita, my beloved Margarita !" she added, as she clasped her in her arms, "never will I again renew this subject."

“ No,” replied Margarita, gazing upon the lovely countenance of the Princess, “ I no longer require silence on this head. The suspicions which you have already created, have destroyed my peace ;—proceed now, and declare to me the full extent of my wretchedness.”

“ Ah, Margarita !” returned Claudia, “ you accuse me of cruelty, but be assured that nothing but the strongest necessity should have induced me to undeceive you with respect to the unfortunate youth.”—She paused for a moment, and wiping away the tears which glistened in her eyes, she thus proceeded—

“ I was deprived of my parents while quite an infant ; and as the castle of my brother could not afford me a proper asylum, he placed me under the protection of the Marchioness Ulderich, where I became the
companion

companion of her daughter, who is nearly of my own age.

“ It was in the Castle of Ulderic that I first formed that attachment, which death, which infidelity itself could not destroy. It is true that I endeavoured to conceal my affection from every other person except the object of it. I was convinced that the Marchioness and my brother would be offended by a connexion which they would think beneath me.

“ The day that I parted from Albert at the Castle of Ulderic, was to me the commencement of a train of sorrows to which I see no end.

“ When I first beheld that lady,” continued Claudia, “ who was the innocent cause of all my misery, I pardoned the faithless Albert, and even prayed for his happiness and the completion of his

wishes ; and although my sufferings were great, yet I had sufficient command over myself to conceal them, till an accidental circumstance led to their disclosure.

“ A few weeks ago my brother visited this place in his way to Hartz Cassel. He then took me aside, and informed me that the purport of his journey was to ask the hand of the Lady Margarita in marriage, and that he had already engaged her uncle, the Lord Rhodolpho, in his favour.—

“ Is it possible,” I replied with some warmth, “ that you would occasion the misery of Albert, who is so deeply attached to Margarita ?”

“ Claudia,” continued my brother in an angry tone, “ it is only from the persuasion that her guardians will never consent to her marriage with that cavalier, that I have aspired to her hand ; and yet,”

yet," he added, "is it not strange that you should appear more interested in the happiness of Albert, than in that of your brother?"

"I was so shocked at this accusation, that I was no longer mistress of myself; and in a fatal hour I disclosed to my brother all that I now have told you. It was perhaps owing to that unfortunate avowal, that Albert, my beloved Albert, is no more! My brother was exasperated against him, and while his anger was yet at it's height, he unhappily met the ill-fated youth at Hartz Caffel."—

While the Princess related these events, Margarita fixed her eyes upon her beautiful countenance. In those lovely features were graces which might attract the most insensible heart: her form was uncommonly elegant, and her frank yet melan-

choly air seemed to bear the strongest testimony to the truth of her assertions.

When she ceased to speak, Margarita, still wishing to clear the reputation of Albert, was prepared to plead for him, and, if possible, to extenuate his fault, when at that moment she painfully recollected his conduct at Rosendhall Castle. She was silent, and, resting her head upon her arm, burst into tears.

The Princess allowed her some moments to recover herself, and perceiving that she was become more tranquil—"As I have forgiven Albert, who destroyed my peace," she said, "may I not expect an equal degree of lenity from Margarita? Will she refuse her pardon to my unfortunate brother, who was led, by a complicated series of provocations, to commit an act, the remembrance of which must

embitter the remainder of his days? Consent only to see him," she added, in an impassioned tone; "say that you will pardon—you will forget—"

"Forget!" repeated Margarita; "the Princess must know it to be impossible."

"What I have myself already effected, I know to be possible," said the Princess. "It is true that I never can forget Albert, that I never can forget the dreadful circumstances attendant on his decease; but I have pardoned my brother, who is, indeed, innocent of the crime, since he was compelled in self-defence to draw his sword."

"In self-defence!" said Margarita with impatience; "no, he took advantage of the agitation of Albert—he was himself cool."

“Do you think it possible that after so many provocations he should still retain the command of his passions?” replied the Princess. “In accusing one, Margarita,” she added, “we condemn the other; as we love the memory of Albert then, let every circumstance of this melancholy event be buried in oblivion; and if you know what it is to see a friend in deep distress, if you can conceive the affection which exists between a brother and a sister, rend not the heart of the sorrowful Claudia by sternly refusing to see her brother. Ah! that silence is favourable to my wishes—you relent—depress not the hopes you have excited!”

“I pray that the Duke may enjoy every happiness,” said Margarita, “but I cannot see him without expressing sentiments

timents of horror which must awaken painful feelings in his breast."

"And is there such harshness in your disposition?" exclaimed the Princess;
"Oh my brother, my brother! can Claudia do so little for you?"

Margarita threw herself upon a chair, and still continued to weep.

The Princess approached her, and kissing her cheek, "My Margarita," she said, with a sweet yet mournful smile, "you no longer deny my earnest pleadings; your heart is at length melted with pity; these mild and charitable acts are the sweetest offerings you can present to the memory of Albert. Heaven has assisted me in the performance of this painful task!" As she uttered these last words, she hastened towards the door.

"Whither

“ Whither would you go ?” said Margarita, arising ; “ let me entreat you not to raise the hopes of the Prince ; I never can—I never will see him.”

“ Margarita,” returned the Princess, retiring into the hall, “ you have raised expectations within me, the disappointment of which would be fatal to my peace.”—As she spoke, she closed the door hastily after her.

“ Wherefore is she gone ?” exclaimed Margarita, following her to the door, “ what have I said to justify her hopes ? Will she seek her brother ? It is impossible that I should see him.”—As she uttered these words, she advanced into the hall ; the Princess was not visible, but several persons approached her, among whom she thought she distinguished the Marquis Ulderic. Wishing to avoid his observation,

observation, she returned hastily into the parlour, where, throwing herself upon a chair, she remained for some moments in a state of extreme perturbation.

It was not long before Claudia returned, followed by the Prince. The countenance of the latter was expressive of grief and remorse ; his eyes were fixed upon the ground, or elevated with melancholy towards the beautiful daughter of Rhodolpho.

Margarita had already turned away in silent anguish, when the Princess seized her hand, and addressed her with the most earnest and pathetic entreaties.

Margarita became pale as death ; her limbs trembled, and she was supported by the Princess.

“ Say only that you will forgive him—look upon him with pity—’tis all he asks,”

asks," said Claudia, while the tears fell from her eyes.

The Prince had fallen on one knee before Margarita ; he heaved a deep sigh, but was silent.

The tears of the Princess at length prevailed ; Margarita extended one hand to the Duke, while with the other she concealed her face. " My Lord," she said, in a faint and tremulous tone, " that Heaven may bless you, is the earnest prayer of Margarita !"

The Prince seized her hand, and pressing it to his lips, " This lenity is more than I deserve, lovely Margarita," he said, in an impassioned tone ; " to merit this indulgence shall be the highest ambition of Castel Nuovo."

" My Lord," said Margarita, gently withdrawing her hand from his, " you
shall

shall always have my prayers and wishes for your prosperity ; but after what has happened," she added, with a more dignified and determined air, " we can never be happy in each other's society ; we must now part for ever. While you remain at this castle, my presence shall be no restraint upon you. I am content to confine myself to my own apartments, the solitude of which is now agreeable to me."

" Margarita," exclaimed the Princess, " will not cancel her recent obligations by a determination at once so cruel and implacable."

" Peace, my sister," said the Prince in a firm yet dejected tone ; " the Lady Margarita has already granted more than Castel Nuovo had reason to ask." He again pressed her hand to his lips, and, praying

praying Heaven to bless her, declared his intention of soon leaving the Castle of Ulderico.

“When I am no longer here,” he added, as he advanced towards the door, “when the Lady Margarita is no longer troubled with my importunities, she will cease to think of the unfortunate Castel Nuovo; his image will be obliterated from her recollection, or she will remember him but with horror and aversion.”

The dejected air with which the Prince uttered these words, inspired Margarita with a degree of pity for him, which for a moment induced her to forget the injuries he had done her; and she assured him that she should always rejoice in his happiness, and would make every allowance for the faults of which he had been guilty.

The

The Prince withdrew, and Claudia, taking a taper in her hand, led Margarita towards her apartment.

The castle was now hushed in silence, and a great part of the family had retired to rest.

“Your generosity this evening, my beloved Margarita,” said Claudia, “will endear you to me for ever.”

“I rejoice,” replied Margarita, “if what I have done has afforded you any consolation.”

They had already ascended the stairs, and entered the great gallery.

“The night is far advanced,” said the Princess, looking at the heavens through the windows which terminated the gallery.

“Go, my Margarita,” she added, as she embraced her, “take some repose; how sweet will be the visions of the night after
the

the noble action which you have performed."

At that instant the door of an adjoining apartment was thrown open, and the Lady Frederica appeared. Her eyes flashed with indignation on beholding the Princess, and she uttered several incoherent expressions of anger, which Margarita did not understand.

The Princess replied in a mild and conciliating tone, and concluded by assuring Frederica that her attachment to her was unalterable.

"Vain profession!" replied the daughter of the Marquis, as she returned to her chamber.

The Princess changed colour several times, and seemed for a moment to be lost in thought; but soon recollecting herself, "The Lady Frederica," she said,

"is

“is of an impetuous and hasty temper, which sometimes leads her to form suspicions of her friends highly injurious to their honour.”

Margarita made no reply; and the Princess, having led her to the end of the gallery, parted from her with every token of affection and gratitude.

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